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The Cheeses of ITALY

The Cheeses Of Italy

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Published by the Italian Institute of Foreign Trade, I.C.E.
under the patronage of the Italian Ministry of Agriculture
Rome

The best of ITALY

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A Tour of Italy
Destination: Italian cheese

You may travel to Italy for its picturesque Medieval towns, beautiful landscapes or to follow the footprints of ancient times, but surely each time you discover a new spot along the peninsula. Last year my travels to the country I love so much took me to the areas where Italian cheeses are made. I learned how the climate and environment influenced the variety of flavors of Italian cheese - how the majestic mountains of the Alps and Appenines, the rugged island terrain of Sardegna, and the glowing warmth of the southern Italian sun all play a vital role in determining the fine quality of the finished products.

My starting point was the Aosta Valley with its towering, snowcapped mountains. Here small, savory mountain cheeses and large wheel-shaped cheeses are still completely hand-made according to recipes followed for generations. In central Italy near Rome, I watched Pecorino, one of Italy's most ancient cheeses, being made from sheep's milk on a small farm. The age-old process, still followed by Italian families, calls for Pecorino to ripen in deep, rocky cellars. In fact, some Etruscan cellars that were recently found near Rome seem to be very suitable environments for aging this cheese. In the Campania reigon in southern Italy, Mozzarella di Bufala is still made according to the ancient formula which calls for buffalo milk. The mozzarella is shaped by hand into large or small balls, egg shapes or braided into thick braids.

The process for making Italian cheeses has remained essentially unchanged over hundreds and even thousands of years. They are still ripened according to type in moist, rocky caves or dry, airy, wood or stone huts. The different types of cheeses produced, however, have grown in number and it is worthwhile to explore the wide variety of diverse flavors.

I also visited many "Consorzi" or producers' associations which closely supervise the production of the individual dairy farms. These associations abide by the strictest of government regulations and guarantee the quality of the cheeses by placing a special seal on them.

Perhaps on your next trip to Italy (or even to the supermarket) you may wish to

include Italian cheese and wine on your itinerary: You will find Italy offers many opportunities for new discoveries.

As you will see, a great assortment of Italian cheeses are available today. The recipes in this book will allow you to experiment with countlees delicious dishes that are prepared with delectable Italian cheese.



Rotraud Michael-Degner





The History of Italian Cheese



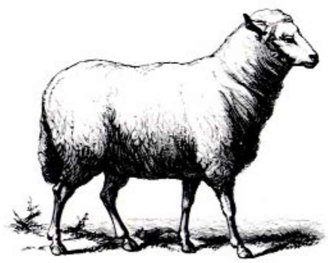
In his pastoral verses, Virgil writes "here the green leaves are filled with sweet apples and tendere chestnuts" but more precisely, he speaks of layers of pressed milk which surely refer to fresh cheese. During this era, the Romans enjoyed a surprising number of cheeses originating from the various provinces. A roman banquet was not complete without an assortment of cheeses from fresh to hard cheeses to soft cheeses spiced with coriander or pepper to even a mountain cheese cured in oil.

Exquisite recipes for cheese dishes were also found in a recipe book written by Apicius. Roman legionnaires were supplied with a ration of cereals, lard and cheese as well as a half liter of wine for their daily marches. The same nutritious cheese has also been a staple for farmers who have for centuries taken it with them to the fields, together with olives, figs and home-made bread. The word "formaggio" derives from the word "forma" - a reference to the small wicker baskets in which cheeses were left to dry. This tradition still continues today.

The oldest known cheese in Italy is Pecorino Romano. It has always been made with sheep's milk. Legend has it Romulus nurtured himself with Pecorino made from sheep's and goat's milk when he founded Rome. Lucius Moderatus Columella recounts how spicy Pecorino was made in the first century B.C.

Today, Pecorino is still the preferred cheese among the Romans. They enjoy it in small pieces accompanied by large, fresh, lima beans and a glass of wine.

The most famous of all Italian cheeses is the golden yellow Parmigiano Reggiano



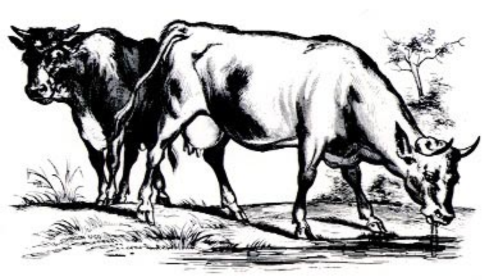


made from cow's milk. Although its origin can not be documented as far back as the birth of Christ, Parma proudly boasts proof that the cheese can be traced to the XIII and XIV centuries. As an indication of how highly esteemed Parmigiano Reggiano was during that era, the poet Francesco Maria Grapaldi put the following words into the mouth of Parmensis Caseus: "I am the noble fruit of the milk of Parma". Since then, this noble fruit, a huge thick golden yellow wheel of the finest hard cheese has been eaten in small pieces or is freshly grated over home-made pasta dishes - pure enjoyment for pasta connoisseurs. Moliere also had a weak spot for Parmigiano. He preferred to eat it in small pieces and often carried some with him. He and other literary figures have praised Parmigiano over the centuries.

Grana Padano appears in the same shape as Parmigiano. It traces its origins back to the century which proves that the "grain" or grana is a forerunner of Parmigiano Reggiano. It is also an excellent grating cheese.

Mozzarella, part of the Provatura and Provola cheese family, must also be included within the framework of ancient cheeses made from buffalo milk. Today's quality production methods follow those of the IV century "mozza" treaties. These treaties were drafted to insure the highest quality specifying color and taste of the herbs as well as the type of grass to be fed to the water buffalos, the influence the moon has on milk in its different phases, and other similar legendary rules.

The sheperd still calls the sensitive buffalos for milking by using a very old and



strange gutteral chant. Mozzarella, with its slightly grainy, elastic consinstency, is processed into appetizing shapes from small, round balls to large braids. It has been a favorite of Neapolitan cuisine since the XIV century and has since become an essential topping for pizza.

Another ancient cheese called Gorgonzola is processed from an entirely different substance know as "muffa nobile" or noble mold. This cheese was invented by chance in the IX century by Lombardian shepherds who made the cheese from the remains of milk. They let the full, fat cheese ripen in a moist rocky cave. This cheese was marked by moldy, blue-green layers to which the shepherds took a liking. It was originally named "Stracchino di Gorgonzola" and was often cited in Medieval literature. Today, Gorgonzola is still made in accordance with the Val Sassino as was done centuries ago.



The process of cheesemaking

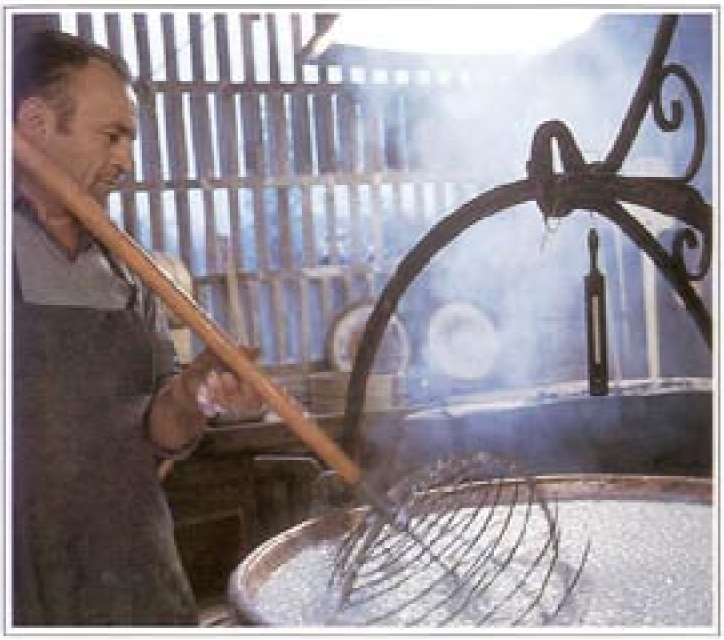
Craftsmanship is still alive in Italy and can be applied to the preparation of cheeses and other dairy products. Cheeses are prepared according to century old methods - free from chemicals and artificial additives.

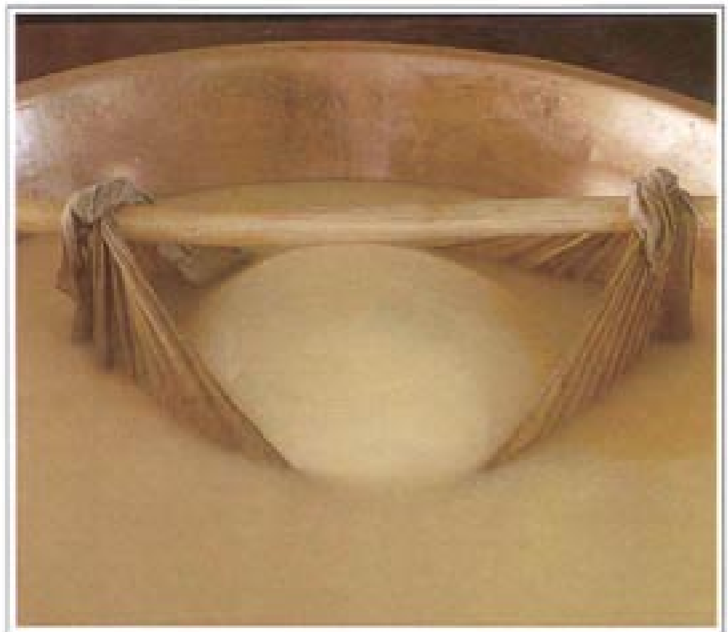


In the "Castello," a rural dairy farm, milk is gathered at night and again in the morning. The two successive milkings are poured into large copper vats for the curdling. Each vat holds 500 liters, the exact quantity necessary to produce 1 form of Parmigiano Reggiano weighing approximately 66 lbs. The cheesemaker only adds a little whey taken from the previous day's production to accelerate the fermentation process. Under the careful watch of the "*maestro cesaro*" (cheese expert) the milk is heated to a temperature of 350 while con-tinuously stirring with a large whip or "*rotella*". Then the rennet, an extract from the stomachs of calves is added. The expert subsequently "splits" the coagulated milk or "curd" with another tool called a "spino", until it shows the finely granular consistency that is desired. This process requires the cheesemaker's careful attention and concentration for if the mass should become just a bit too hot, the contents of the entire vat would no longer be of use.

The curd separates itself from the whey, and is removed by the cheesemaker and his assistants and placed in a large linen cloth. It is then poured into a circular wooden form or "*fascera*" that gives gives the cheese the characteristic shape of Parmigiano Reggiano. Several days later, the mass solidifies and the cheese is placed in brine to allow for salt absorption and penetration. After a brief exposure to the sun, the cheese forms are deposited onto large wooden shelves for the first ripening stage. At this point the forms must be regularly turned over and dusted. This requires the supervision and care of an experienced cheesemaker and staff. Some months later, Parmigiano Reggiano leaves the dairy farm and is transferred to large storehouses for additional maturation. These warehouses are financed by both cooperatives and banks. The ripening and storage processes take place under the supervision of highly paid specialists.

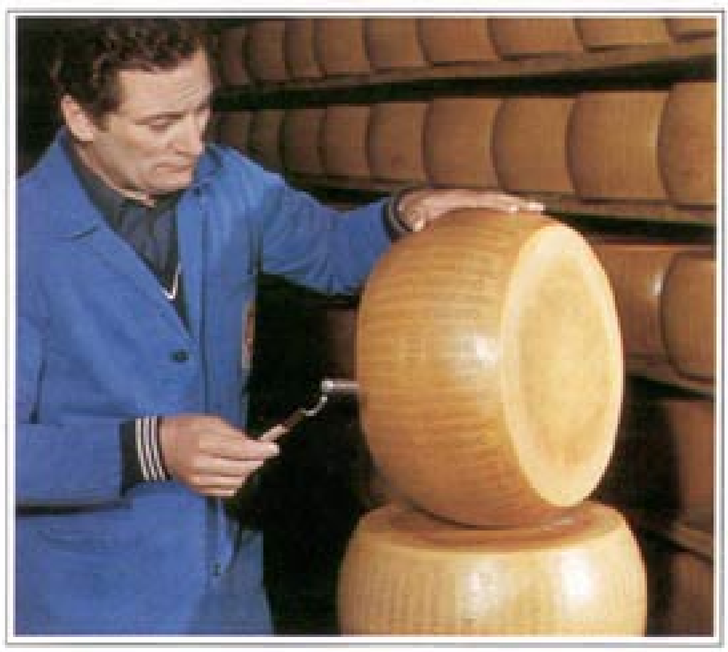
Not before the summer does the Parmigiano Reggiano appear on the market. First the cheese must be inspected and











then awarded a "Parmigiano Reggiano" seal of quality approval. The date and the indentification number of the dairy farm are also indicated on the seal.

Grana Padano is produced in the same way, although milk obtained throughout the year is used in making this cheese, while for Parmigiano Reggiano, only milk collected during summer months is employed.

The preparation of different cheeses is basically the same. The only variation occurs with Mozzarella when the "mozza" is added through a complex process. This is done to create a special doughy mixture that can be stretched. After the curdling process has been completed, the cheese curd is prepared from water buffalo milk.

It must be carefully drained and dried (the drained whey is used to prepare the appetizing ricotta cheese). The Mozzarella curd is then divided into sections and pieces, An elastic dough is made by heating the crumbly mixture in boiling water; this dough is then divided into sections approximately weighing 8 1/2 lbs each. From this, the "*caciari*" create all the various shaped Mozzarella (up to now no machine has been able to successfully braid a Mozzarella). The Mozzarella is left to float in brine overnight before being sold to the consumer the next morning. It must be eaten while still fresh.

Gorgonzola acquires its unique characteristics by the addition of blue-mold fermenting agents into the fresh cheese curd. The cheese form is filled during 2 operations with cooling of the curd between each. The temperature variation in the curd promotes growth of special bacteria which will assist in curing the cheeese. After a few weeks the cheese is punctured by fine spores in the curd. These micro-organisms stimulate the characteristic blue-veining which makes Gorgonzola tangy and spicy. After piercing, the Gorgonzola is left to ripen for 60 to 90 days in moist, cool, cheese cellars.



The Regions and their Cheeses

Piemonte and Val D'Aosta

These are rich in high quality agricultural products: meat, vegetables, fruits, game and the exquisite, delicately-scented truffles of Alba.

These two regions are a true paradise for gourmets. Here they will find soft, slightly sweet Fontina cheese as well as small mountain cheeses from Val D'Aosta, such as Toma, Tomini and Caprino. In Piemonte, the noble Gorgonzola is primarily produced in Novara while Robiola di Roccaverano is made in the provinces of Asti and Alessandria.

Liguria

Delicious cheeses from cow, sheep and goat's milk are produced in the Italian riviera Region of Liguria. These cheeses best when eaten fresh include Formagetta and Casareccio as well as the richly traditional Giuncato. A basic ingredient for the renowned Pesto sauce is Pecorino Fiore Sardo or Pecorino Romano.

Lombardia

Used mainly as a grating cheese, Grana Padano is made in the Po Valley and is called "Val Padano" in the local dialect. Gorgonzola, Provolone Dolce and Taleggio, as well as the full, creamy Mascarpone are also produced in this region. Other regional specialties include Bagos, Bitto, Branzi and Quartirolo.

Trentino Alto Adige

Excellent cheeses are produced in this splendid alpine mountain range. These can be purchased in local shops under the names of Asiago Nostrano Magro, Asiago Nostrano Trentino and Spressa.

Friuli-Venezia Giulia

The aristocratic cuisine of Venice and the colorful rustic cuisine of Friuli and Venezia Giulia are based on seafood and local produce. Different types of cheeses are available here, among the best known are Montasio, Asiago Pressato and Asiago d'Allevo.

Emilia Romagna

If the land of plenty were to be found in Italy, then it most likely would be in Emilia Romagna. Those who wish to experience


NOVA
ITALIÆ
DELINEATIO
GOLFO DI VENETIA
MARE TIRRENO
MARE DI SARDEGNA
Mare Ligustico
MARE
Ionio
SCALA MILIARIVM

how pasta dishes can be en-hanced with cheese should visit this region. It is not surprising that the most famous of all Italian cheeses, Parmigiano Reggiano and Grana Padano (the less famous "brother") are produced in this area. A pasta dish without these two cheeses would be quite inconceivable.

Toscana

Many small dairy farms dot Tuscany's cypress covered hills where excellent cheeses are made from sheep's milk, Caciotta or Cacio as well as Marzolino della Toscana. The Tuscans also produce their own Pecorino, called Pecorino Toscano or Pecorino Senese - a somewhat stronger cheese than Pecorino Romano.

Marche and Umbria

These two beautiful, yet still unknown, regions are filled with splendid landscapes and artistic treasures. The cuisine is especially praised for its grilled meats on skewers. Excellent fresh cheeses are made in these regions including Bagiotto, Caciofiore (Caciotta) and

Lazio, Abruzzi and Molise

Lazio, Abruzzi and Molise are known for their hearty cooking which marries well with sharp Pecorino Romano. This cheese has become a staple for many Roman dishes prepared with spaghetti and meat. Provatura and Scamorza belong to the same family of soft cheeses as their counterpart, Mozzarella.

Campania

Under the strong rays of Campania's sun the most aromatic vegetables and sweet fruits in Italy are grown. In the hot southern climate nothing is more refreshing than the sweet, sour milky taste of Mozzarella, which to this day is made with buffalo milk. The typical round or eggshaped appearance of Mozzarella makes it readily distinguishable from other types of cheeses. Other famous cheeses from this region are Provolone and Caciocavallo.

Puglia, Basilicata and Calabria

Specially crafted cheeses come from the southern regions of the peninsula. One example is the Burrata. It is made from a

mixture of cow's and buffalo milk to which sheep's whey is added. The soft, warm cheese mixture is formed by the cheesemaker into a vase shaped mold. This mold is then filled with the cheese cream. Burrata is sold in reed-like leaf wrappings and must be eaten while still fresh.

Sicilia

On this sunny island still marked by ancient civilizations, the art of cooking is markedly different from the other regions. The Greeks, Sarcens and Spaniards have passed down countless delicious recipes. Memories of trips to Sicily come to mind when one sprinkles olive oil on a piece of home-made bread, adding to it, bits of onion, tomatoes, olives and pieces of Pecorino Siciliano. These delicacies should be accompanied by a bottle of locally produced wine - a tradition that is still followed by shepherds and farmers in this region.

Sardegna

Shepherds still wander about this island leading their flocks to pasture. Here is where the lightly-seasoned Pecorino cheese is made. Curiously it is called Pecorino Romano. Another typical Sardinian sheep's milk cheese is Fiore Sardo with is unusual flat, double-coned shape which the Sardinians call Schiena di Mulo (mule's back). Fiore Sardo is consumed as a table cheese when fresh and used for grating, after ripening.

The following pages contain a brief description of cheeses protected by special Italian laws (n. 1269) in effect as of October 30th, 1955. Their production is supervised by a D.O.C. consortium of cheese producers.

Parmigiano Reggiano

Table and grating cheese



This is a big, round half-fat hard cheese made from cow's milk in a cylindrical, slightly convex form. *Weight*: 48-85 tbs. The rind has an oily sheen and is dark or of a natural golden yellow in color.

The word Parmigiano Reggiano are repeatedly stamped around the entire rind. The hard inner finely grained body is straw-yellow in color and has tiny "eyes" in which a "tear" (of whey) still retains the moisture.

Fat content: Minimum 32%

Production period: All year.

Ripening: The slow, natural drying and ripening process takes place in modern warehouses. It lasts at least one year, from summer to summer. Then the *fresco = young* Parmigiano Reggiano is put on the market. After two years of ripening, it is considered *vecchio = aged* and is then used for cooking as grating cheese or as "dessert."

Taste: Delicate with a charactertistic fragrance, flavorful but not strong.

Production areas: Emilia Romagna: in the province of Bologna on the left bank of the river Reno-Mantova, and on the right of the river Po-Modena-Parma and Reggio Emilia.

Use: It is considered the king of all Italian cheeses - an essential ingredient in Italian cuisine. Freshly grated, it is sprinkled on pasta dishes, risotto, polenta and minestrone or used as a topping on meat and vegetable dishes. It is also popular as a table cheese. Parmigiano Reggiano is divided into portions or little pieces with a special almond-shaped knife.


PARMIGIANO
REGGIANO

Grana Padano

Table and grating cheese

A big, round half-fat hard cheese made from cow's milk in a cylindrical, slightly convex form. *Weight:* 48-85 lbs. The rind has an oily sheen and is dark or of a natural golden yellow in color.

The name Grana Padano is stamped onto the rind - a quality seal placed after inspection by experts. The cheese has a hard, flaky granular texture that ranges from white to straw-yellow in color and has tiny "eyes" in which a "tear" (of whey) still retains the moisture.



Fat content: Minimum 32%

Production period: All year.

Ripening: The slow, natural drying and ripening process in modern warehouses may last up to a maximum of 24 and a minimum of 6 months.

Taste: *fresco = young*: soft and delicate; *vecchio = aged*: sweetly spiced.

Production areas: In the Po Valley, in parts of Piemonte, Lombardia, Veneto and Emilia-Romagna.

Use: Essential in Italian cuisine. It is freshly grated and sprinkled upon pasta dishes, risotto, polenta and minestrone and is used as a topping on meat and vegetable dishes. A popular table-cheese as well, Grana Padano is divided into portions or little pieces with a special almond-shaped knife.


GRANA
G
GRANA
PADANO
P

Asiago

Table and grating cheese

Asiago d'Allevo: a half-fat hard cheese made from cow's milk in a flat cylindrical form with an with an almost straight border. *Weight*: 17- to 25.5 lbs. The smooth rind is slightly brown in color. Golden yellow in color, the cheese is granulous with small to medium size holes.

Fat content: Minimum 34%

Production period: All year.

Ripening: 16-18 months.

Taste: Delicate taste when fresh; spicy and savory when aged.

Production areas: In the province of Vicenza, Trento, Padova and Treviso.

Use: Consumed as a table cheese up to 6 months, then used for grating.



Asiago Pressato: a half-fat cheese from cow's milk in a flat, cylindrical form with an with an almost straight border. *Weight*: 24 to 33 lbs. The smooth rind is straw-yellow in color. The white or light straw-yellow cheese is compact with irregular holes.

Fat content: Minimum 44%

Production period: All year.

Ripening: 20-40 days.

Taste: Pleasantly fresh and slightly sweet.

Production areas: In the province of Vicenza, Trento, Padova and Treviso.

Use: When fresh, used as table cheese.



Caciocavallo

Table and grating cheese

A full-fat, hard cheese from cow's milk made into a ball or pear shape, the upper end of which is tied-up, forming a ball-shaped thickening so that the form is likely to resemble an irregular "8". *Weight:* approximately 4.4 lbs. The rind is thin and smooth, the cheese white or straw-yellow, compact and smooth.

Fat content: Minimum 44%

Production period: All year.

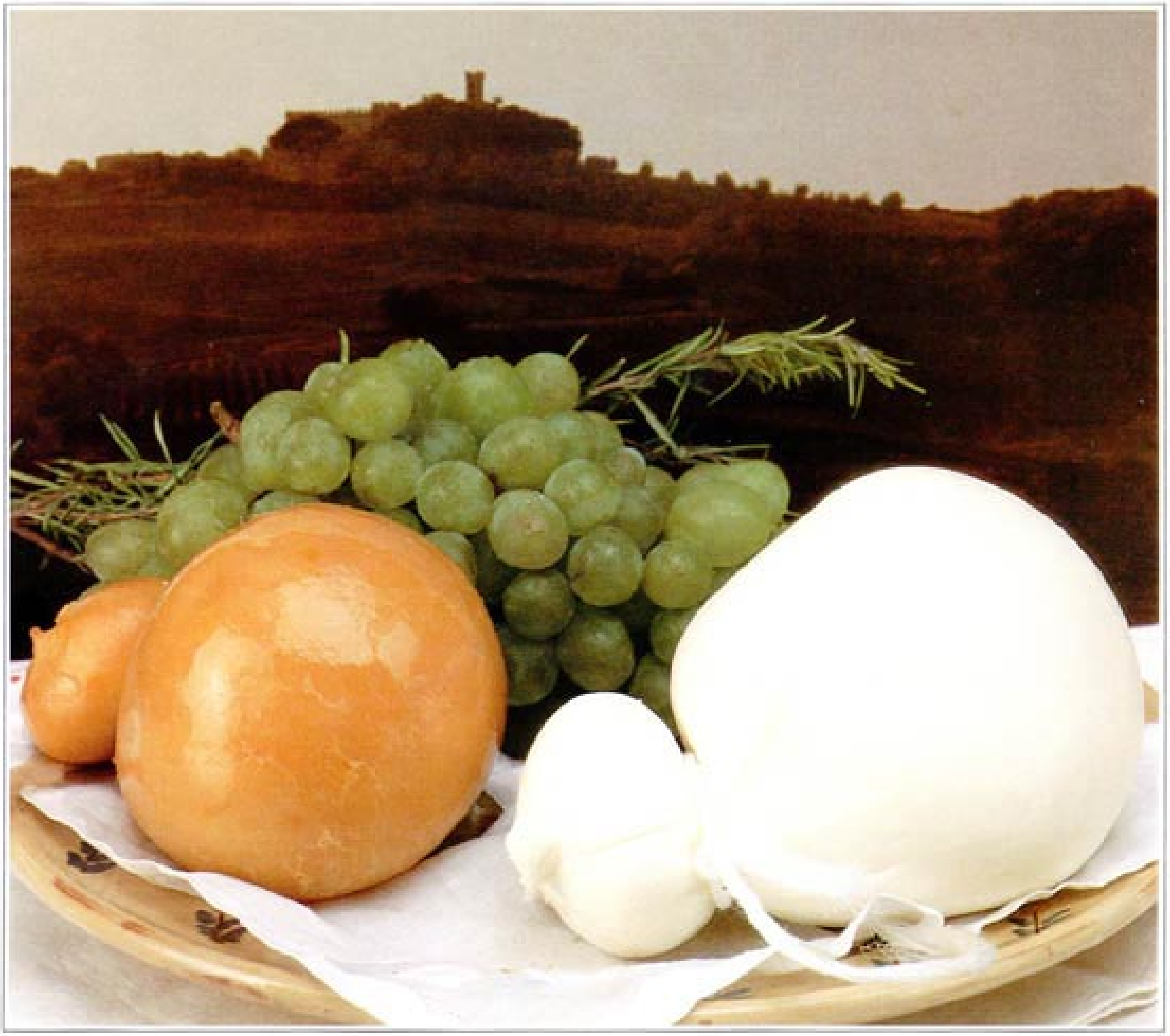
Ripening: 6 months for table cheese - 12 months for grating cheese. For ripening the cheeses are tied in pairs then hung.



Taste: *Young* = mild and sweet; *ripened* = spicy and savory.

Production areas: The production of Caciocavallo was originally limited to the southern regions, today however the cheese is made throughout Italy. Provatura is a mild Caciocavallo which is eaten while still fresh.

Use: When fresh it is used as a table cheese, ripened as a grating cheese as well as an ingredient in various cheese dishes.



Fiore Sardo

Table and grating cheese

A full-fat hard cheese made exclusively from sheep's milk in characteristic forms with a curved border. *Weight:* 3-8 1/2 lbs. The color of the rind varies from strong yellow to dark brown. The cheese is white or straw-yellow in color.

Fat content: Minimum 40%

Production period: Generally from December to July.

Ripening: At least 6 months for the grating cheese.



Taste: Characteristically savory taste which becomes stronger when ripened.

Production areas: Sardegna

Use: King of the Sardinian cheeses, very nutritious and easily digestible. When young, it is used as table cheese and after 6 months of ripening as grating cheese.



Fontina

Table and cooking cheese

A high-fat cheese made from cow's milk in a cylindrical form with a slightly concave border. *Weight:* 17-39 1/2 lbs. The thin rind is slightly-brown and hard. Straw yellow in color, the cheese has a soft texture with tiny round holes.



Fat content: Minimum 45%

Production period: All year.

Ripening: After salting, a 3 months storage period for ripening is needed.

Taste: Delicate, mild and fine.

Production areas: The region of the Val D'Aosta. Production of Fontina dates back to Middle Ages.

Use: As a table cheese, and because it is easy to melt, it is popular for foundues, cheese creams and au-gratin dishes.



Gorgonzola

Table cheese

A buttery, soft, green-mold cheese (table and soft cheese) made from cow's milk in a high, cylindrical form, each weighing 13-37 lbs. The rind is rough and reddish, the cheese is white or light straw-yellow lined with blue-green flecks. Before packing, each form is cut crosswise and wrapped in tin foil. In the center of each foil is an identification mark - the small letter "g" for gorgonzola surrounded by the name of the gorgonzola constortium.



Fat content: Minimum 48%

Production period: All year.

Ripening: 2-3 months.

Taste: Aromatic and savory flavor.

Production areas: In the 12th century this bluegreen veined cheese was produced in the small village of Gorgonzola near Milano and aged naturally in rocky caves. Today Gorgonzola is produced only in specifically designated areas of Piemont and Lombardy.

Use: Famous table cheese which is often served with grapes and nuts. It is also a popular ingredient in preparing sauces, stuffings, egg dishes and pasta dishes.



Montasio

Table and grating cheese

A high-fat hard cheese made from cow's milk in cylindrical form. *Weight:* 11-19 1/2 lbs. The rind is elastic and smooth. The solid, finely grained texture of a young Montasio is slightly straw-yellow in color; a ripened Montasio is intense yellow in color with small holes.

Fat contents: Minimum 40%

Production period: All year.

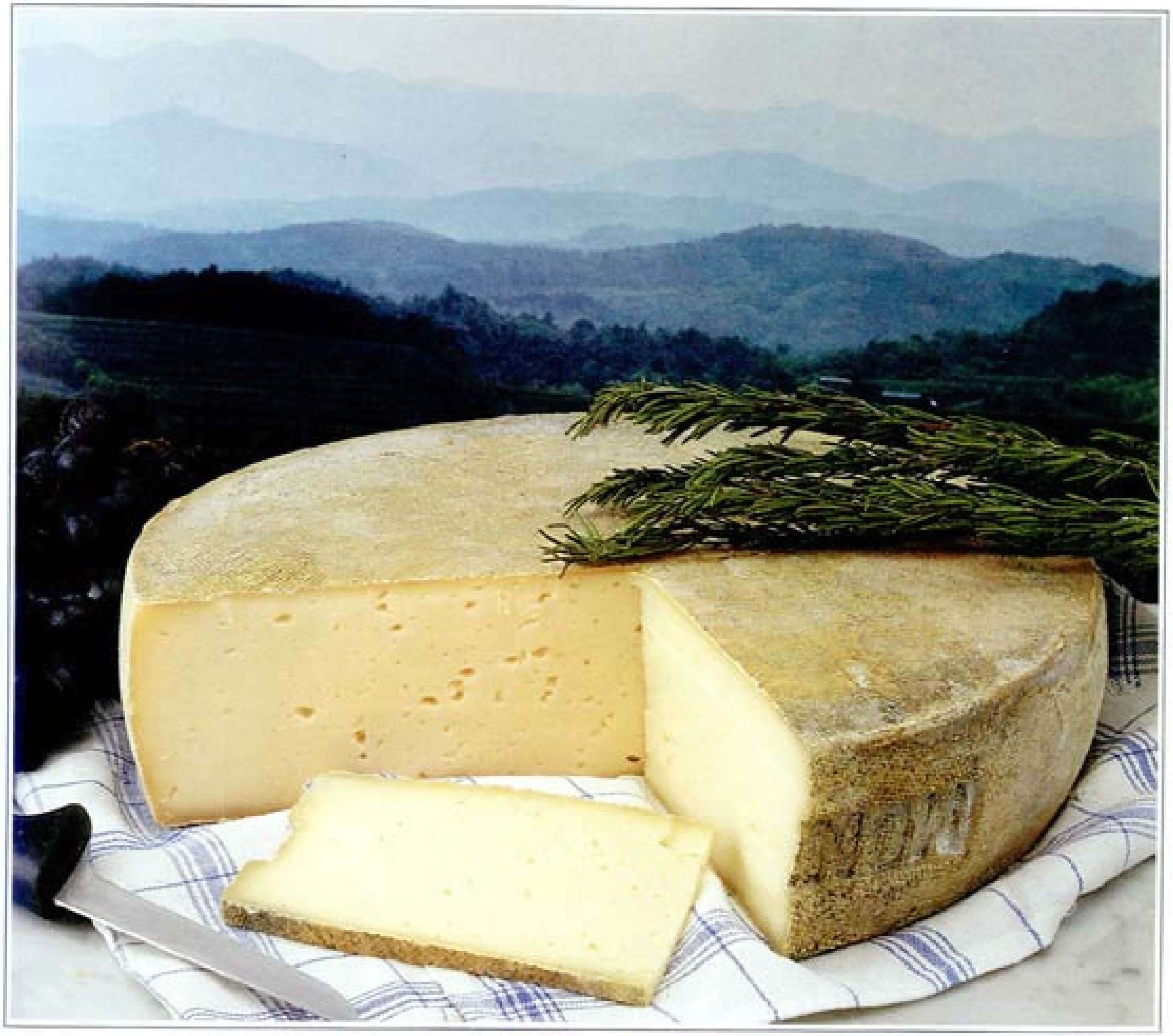
Ripening: Natural ripening; after 2-3 months of storage the young Montasio is ready for eating. After more than 12 months it is used as grating cheese.



Taste: Young Montasio has a slightly sweet, milky taste; on the other hand when in an advanced stage of ripening it has a salty and piquant taste.

Production areas: Montasio was first produced in the 13th century in the famous convent of Moggio and for a long time afterwards it was exclusively made in the region of Venezia-Giulia. Today Montasio is also produced throughout the Veneto region as well as adjoining areas.

Use: Consumed as a table cheese when fresh, suitable for grating when ripened to enhance the flavor of pasta and rice dishes as well as vegetable soups.



Mozzarella di Bufala

Table cheese

A fresh, stringy cheese made from buffalo milk in various forms and sizes (ball, egg shaped cheeses, braids). *Weight:* 1/4 to 1 1/2 lbs. Its rind is smooth, shiny and transparent. The cheese is porcelain-white in color and elastic in texture. When cut it shows a fine layered structure. A smoked version of the Mozzarella is also avaiable on the market.

Fat content: Minimum 50%.

Production period: All year.

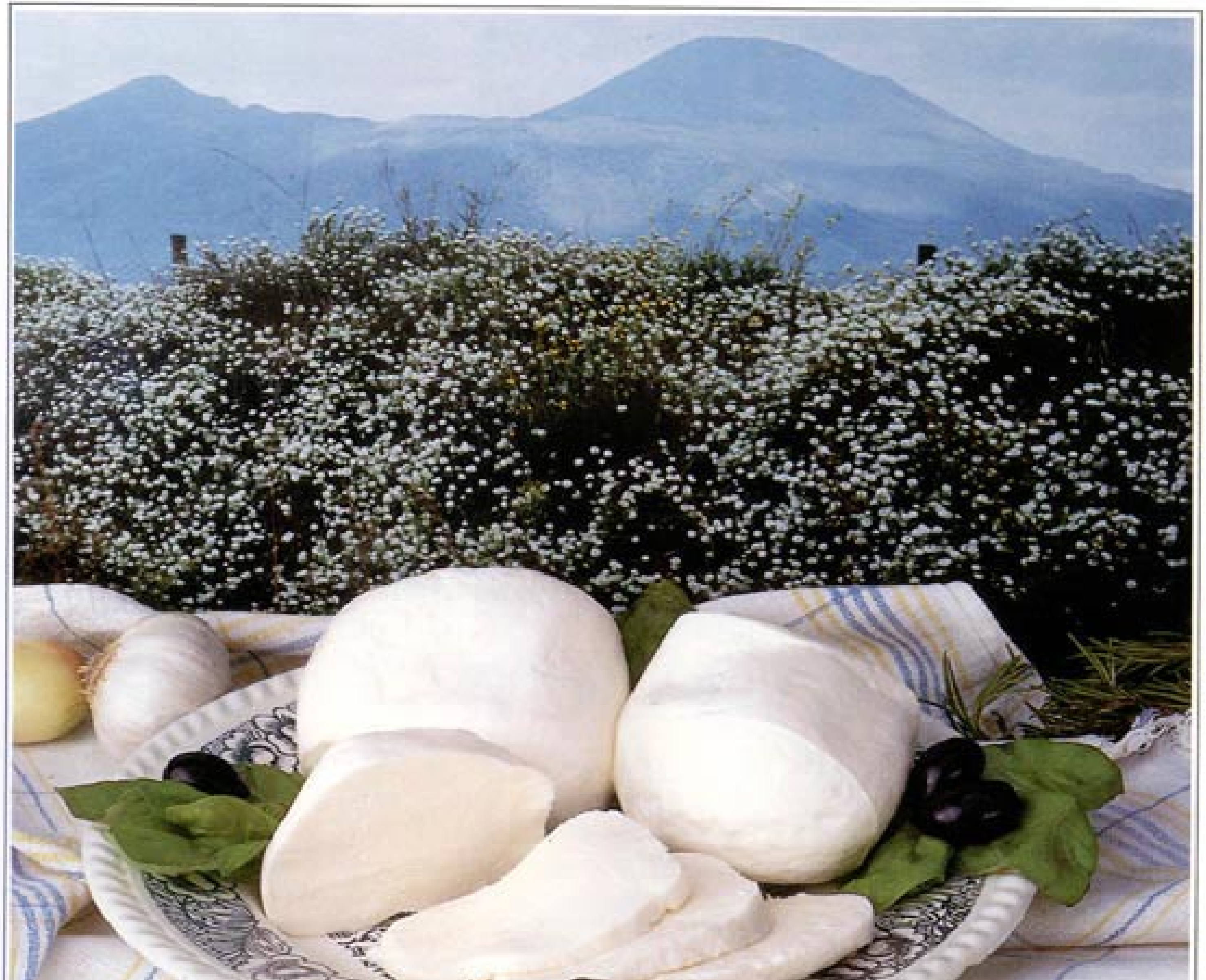
Ripening: Must be consumed very fresh; it is not suitable for aging.



Taste: Pleasantly sour and refreshing.

Production area: Campania - 13th century literature even makes mention of the Mozzarella di Bufala.

Use: Popular table cheese. In southern Italy it is an essential ingredient in the preparation of pizza, pasta dishes and au-gratin. dishes.



Pecorino Romano

Table and grating cheese

A half-fat hard cheese made exclusively from sheep's milk in cylindrical blocks. *Weight:* 17-44 lbs. According to tradition the rind is generally dark brown in color. White to light straw-yellow in color, this cheese has a hard, grainy texture.

Fat content: Minimum 36%

Production period: Only during the period from November to July.

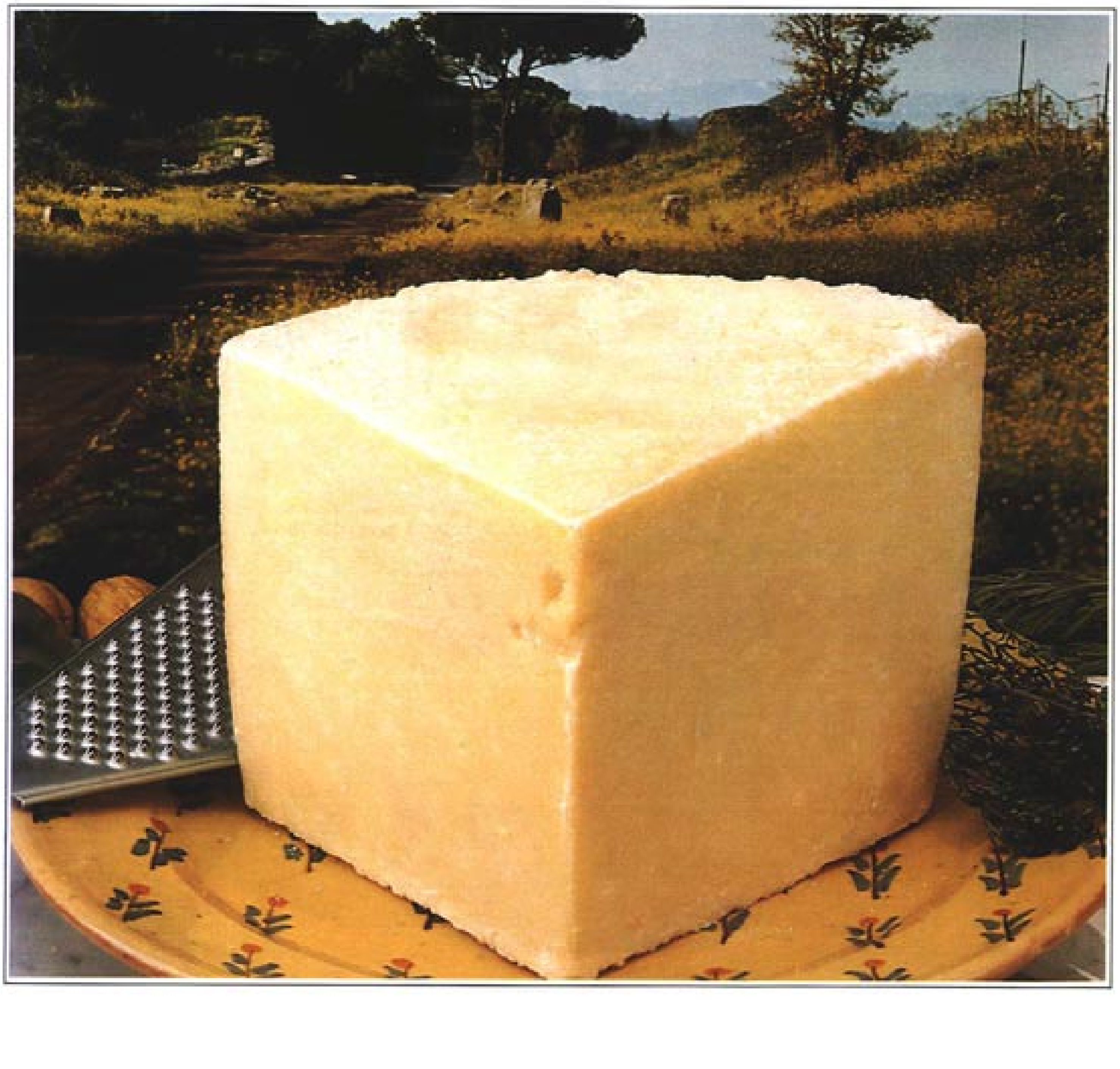
Ripening: At least 8 months.



Taste: Marked by a characteristic aroma and a flavorful, slightly sharp taste.

Production areas: Lazio and Sardegna.

Use: Mainly used as a grating cheese in Roman and Southern Italian cuisines, enhancing any dish with its particularly pleasant scent. One of the oldest cheeses in the world.



Pecorino Siciliano

Table and grating cheese

A round, full-fat hard cheese made exclusively from sheep's milk in cylindrical blocks with flat, slightly concave border. *Weight:* 8.8-24.4 lbs. The rind is white to light yellow with the imprint of the basket in which it was pressed. It is a hard compact cheese, white or light yellow in color, with few holes.

Fat content: Minimum 40%

Production period: Only during the period from October to June.



Ripening: Occurs by means of dry salting and lasts at least 4 months.

Taste: Characteristically marked by aroma and hearty, spiced taste.

Production areas: Sicilia.

Use: As grating cheese for many Sicilian pasta dishes and as a table cheese.



Pressato

Table cheese

A round, full-fat hard cheese made from cow's milk in cylindrical forms. *Weight:* 19 1/2- 30 1/2 lbs. The rind is thin and elastic the body smooth and white to light yellow in color with irregular holes.



Fat content: Minimum 30%

Production period: All year.

Ripening: After pressing, the cheese needs 1-2 months for ripening.

Taste: Pleasantly mild and slightly sweet.

Production areas: Originally the production was limited to the area of Vicenza in the Veneto region; today its production is permitted throughout Italy. In Italy the Pressato is also called Spressa.

Use: Pressato is exclusively used as a table cheese.



Provolone

Table and grating cheese

A full-fat hard cheese made from cow's milk in various round or oval forms, often tied-up lengthwise with strings, then hung in pairs. *Weight:* generally 2-13 lbs. However heavier cheeses are also produced. This rind is golden-yellow with a sheen. The solid, lightly elastic body has a white to light-yellow color and practically no holes. Each cheese bears a seal of quality: a green-white-red label with the inscription "Consorzio del Formaggio Tipico Provolone".



Fat content: Minimum 45%

Product period: All year.

Ripening: According to the desired ripening level anywhere from 2 to 6 months.

Taste: Varies with age. When 1 to 2 months old the Provolone is mild and lightly sweet, after 4 months of ripening it has a spicy, butterlike taste, after 6 months its taste is savory and hearty. A smoked Provolone with the typical smokey taste is also available.

Production areas: Produced throughout Italy.

Use: Popular table cheese. Also used in cooking as an ingredient in salads and as grating cheese.



Ragusano

Table and grating cheese

A cube-shaped, full-fat hard cheese made from cow's milk with blunted edges. *Weight:* 13.2 -26.4 lbs. The rind of the young cheese, is straw to golden-yellow, that of the aged, ripened Ragusano is dark brown. The inner compact body is white to straw-yellow with few holes.

Fat content: Minimum 44%

Production period: All year.

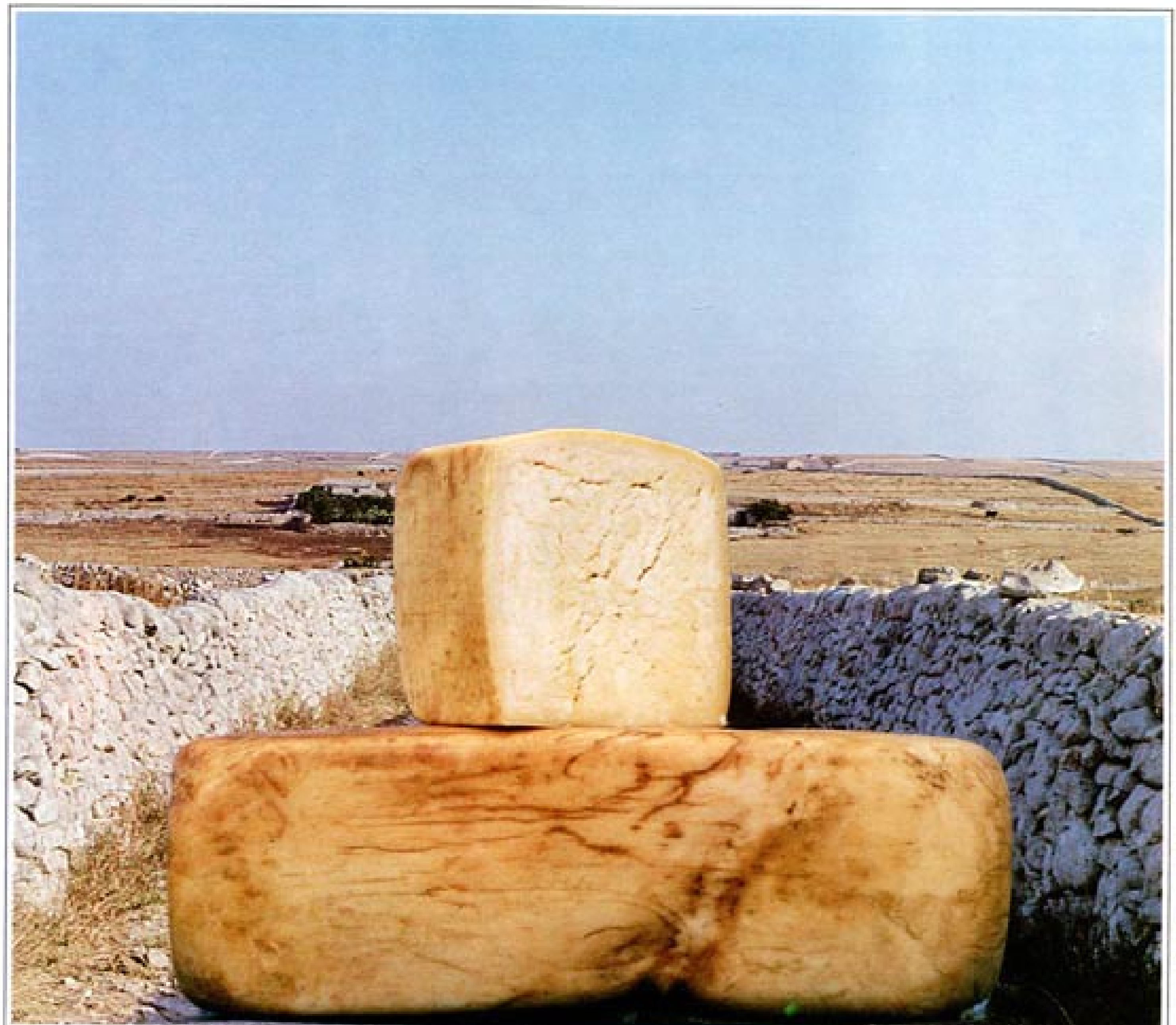
Ripening: The salted cheeses are tied in pairs and hung over frames for ripening - sometimes it is also smoked.



Taste: Up to 6 months it is mild and soft, when ripened spicy and savory. Smoked Ragusano has a typical taste of its own.

Production areas: Sicilia.

Use: When young, used as a table cheese, after 6 months ripening, as a grating cheese for pasta dishes.



Robiola di Roccaverano

Table cheese

A full-fat, fresh cheese made from a mixture of cow's and sheep's or goat's milk in flat, cylindrical forms of various sizes. *Weight:* 1/2 lb. The white border is slightly grooved, the body is finely grained and of a porcelain-white color.



Fat content: Minimum 45%

Production period: All year. A requested specialty is the Robiola del Becco prepared only in October-November from goat's milk which is particularly aromatic in this period.

Ripening: 8-15 days.

Taste: While fresh, Robiola is pleasantly sour, spicy and mild.

Production areas: Parts of Piemonte and Val D'Aosta. The ancient Romans are said to have always made Robiola according to the same recipe.

Use: As a table-cheese it is nicely paired with rustic home-made bread.


Robiola

Taleggio

Table cheese

A full-fat, soft cheese made from cow's milk in a flat, square form. *Weight:* 3 1/2 to 4 1/2 lbs. The thin, soft rind is yellow-pink, the body white to straw-yellow in color.

Fat content: Minimum 48%

Production period: All year.

Ripening: 40 days.



Taste: Fine spicy flavor. Unique taste unike any other Italian cheese.

Production areas: Produced for centuries in the Valley of the same name near Bergamo, Taleggo is now produced primarily in the region of Lombardia.



The following is a brief synopsis of the Italian laws established to ensure the high quality of Italian cheeses:

Regulations Safeguarding Production Methods and the Consumer

Law 1269 went into effect on October 30, 1955 to safeguard the D.O.C. denomination of origin and the particular characteristics of the cheeses. Under the Ministry of Agriculture a permanent commission was set up in Italy to designate the specific production areas of the various types of cheeses. This served to standardize the production methods and the physical and chemical characteristics of each type of cheese. This law allows the Ministry of Agriculture, Industry and Commerce to authorize the individual consortium to supervise production methods. This is done on a self-regulatory basis. The law states that those agencies or producers that place products of inferior quality on the market may be subject to fines or imprisonment, based on the violation committed. This law also affects any producer who sells products that do not conform with the quality standards set by the D.O.C. regulations.

This law includes detailed descriptions of the manufacturing processes as well as the specific characteristics of the cheeses. These descriptions are issued by presidential decree.

The following list of 13 cheeses are protected by the D.O.C. law:

ASIAGO
BRA
CASTELMAGNO
FIORE SARDO
FONTINA
GORGONZOLA
GRANA PADANO
MURAZZANO
PARMIGIANO REGGIANO
PECORINO ROMANO
PECORINO SICILIANO
RASCHERA
ROBIOLA DI ROCCAVERANO

These additional 7 cheeses are subject to quality protection laws:

CACIOCAVALLO
MONTASIO
MOZZARELLA DI BUFALA
PRESSATO
PROVOLONE
RAGUSANO
TALEGGIO

These genuine "treasures" are gaining importance even abroad.

How Cheese is Preserved and Stored

Cool cellars are the ideal storage places for cheeses. Unfortunately, these conditions are not often found in modern buildings. Thus, cheese should be stored in the lower vegetable drawer of the refrigerator. All types of cheeses should be individually wrapped to avoid the mixing of different flavors. Also, different varieties of cheeses should not be kept in the same plastic container! Soft cheeses as well as sliced cheeses should be first wrapped in tinfoil, then placed in a plastic wrapping. Hard cheeses must be placed in moist, damp cloths prior to refrigeration. Grating cheeses can be kept in plastic containers and stored in a cool place in the kitchen.

Fresh cheeses can be stored only for a limited period of time, even when refrigerated; therefore, Mozzarella should be preserved in brine which keeps air from seeping in. This can also be done at home for Mozzarella that will not be immediately consumed. For best results, store the Mozzareila in the freezer so that it can retain its full flavor. This method is unanimously approved by cheese producers from Campania. Soft cheeses can withstand freezing well, whereas hard cheeses are not suitable for freezing because they tend to crumble.

Cheeses that have been frozen, should be unwrapped and left to thaw for up to eight hours at room temperature so that their full flavor can be restored.

Cheese Arrangements

The nicest background for an assortment of cheeses is a rustic wooden board. But other alternatives include arranging cheeses on a round, white marble dish, colorful ceramic plates (especially dark green or brown to bring out the shades of the light colored cheeses), white porcelain or smooth thick glass. You may wish to place them on a flat basket lined with leaves or a checkered linen tablecloth. Silver or tin serving dishes should be protected with a somewhat smaller wooden board to prevent tarnishing.

Cheese arrangements are particularly inviting when the cheeses are arranged in whole pieces rather than cut into slithers or slices. The cheeses should be arranged according to their size. When cut in cakelike slices, the cheese can be arranged point upwards, that is with the rind resting on the plate. A thick piece of Parmigiano Reggiano or Grana Padano should be placed on a different board with its accompanying almond-shaped knife alongside. With this, each individual piece or "panino" may be pried off without disturbing the other cheeses on the plate.

Generally, a sufficient number of cheese knives should be made available for each type of cheese. Serve an assortment of cheeses of different styles. You might include a "hard cheese" such as Fiore Sardo or Provolone, "sliced cheeses" - Fontina, "savory cheeses" - Gorgonzola or Taleggio and a "fresh cheese" such as Mozzarella. A small separate bowl should be used for Mascarpone or Ricotta.

A nice addition to a cheese platter would be a tall, narrow glass filled with celery sticks. For decoration add fresh watercress and parsley or small cucumbers cut into fan-shaped figures. Grapes can also be a suitable granishing. On a large cheese spread, walnuts also add a nice touch.

Bread should be placed alongside in a separate basket. Rye rolls, pumpernickle, nut, rye, wheat and white breads are recommended but, not cheese-flavored crackers! This would prevent the enjoyment of the full flavor of the cheeses.



Wine and Cheese Etiquette

There is an old Italian saying: "Kitchen and cellar go together." This means that regional cheeses should be served with locally produced wines.

According to this old saying, one would certainly be limited in his choice of wines for the popular Lambrusco from Emilia Romagna would always have to be served with Parmigiano Reggiano. It is not my intention to criticize the sparkling Lambrusco wine, but only to state that many Italian wines would pair well with the seasoned Grana Padano.

Experts have set down guidelines for wine and cheese etiquette. They recomend that the various characteristics of the cheese - salt content, dryness, fat content, origin and type of milk - be carefully matched with the color, body, sugar content, age and flavor of the accompanying wines. This requires that the consumer have a knowledge of wine and cheese. To guide the consumer in this quest, the Italian Sommelier Association (A.I.S.) published the following chart that indicates which wine and cheese combinations are suitable for various occasions.

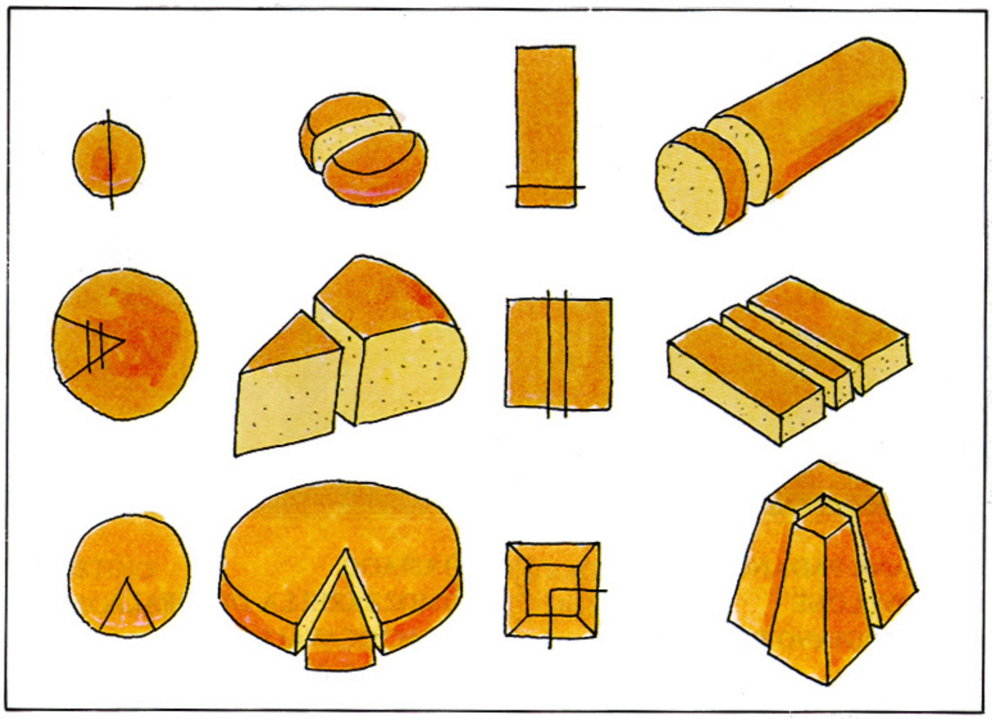

1973
Barolo

Which wine marries particilarly well with which cheese?

Cheese type	Wine with light cheese snacks	Wine with cheese entrees	Wine for ending a festive meal
ASIAGO	TOCAI DEL PIAVE	BREGANZE CABERNET	VALPOLICELLA RECIOTO AMARONE
FIORE SARDO	VERMENTINO DI GALLURA	CANNONAU SARDEGNA	VERNACCIA ORISTANO
FONTINA	BLANC DE MORGEX	BARBERA D'ALBA	CAREMA
GORGONZOLA	TRAMIER A. ADIGE	VALTELLINA SUP.	PICOLIT COLLI ORIENTALI FR.
GRANA PADANO	RIESLING TRENTINO	VALPOLICELLA CLASSICO	BAROLO
PARMIGIANO REGGIANO	TRENTINO PINOT SPUMANTE	LAMBRUSCO SORBARA	BARBARESCO
PECORINO ROMANO	MARINO SUPERIORE	CHIANTI COLLI SENESI	CHIANTI CLASSICO RISERVA
PECORINO SICILIANO	ALCAMO	ETNA ROSSO	MARSALA VERGINE
ROBIOLA DI ROCCAVERANO	GAVI	NEBBIOLO D'ALBA	BAROLO
CACIOCAVALLO	FRANCIACORTA PINOT	MERLOT COLLIO	VIN SANTO TOSCANO
MONTASIO	SAUVIGNON COLLIO	REFOSCO GRAVE F.	VERDUZZO AMABILE COLLI OR. F.
MOZZARELLA DI BUFALA	SOAVE CLASSICO	ROSÈ CASTEL DEL MONTE	MOSCATO PASSITO PANTELLERIA
PRESSATO	PROSECCO BRUT CONEGLIANO	CABERNET PRAMAGGIORE	RECIOTO DI SOAVE
PROVOLONE	GRECO DI TUFO	SANGIOVESE DI ROMAGNA	BRUNELLO DI MONTALCINO
RAGUSANO	VERDICCHIO JESI	CERASUOLO DI VITTORIA	MOSCATO DI SIRACUSA
TALEGGIO	OLTREPÒ PAVESE RIESLING	VALECALEPIO ROSSO	VALTELLINA SFURZAT

Proper Cheese Cutting Methods

The art of cheese cutting is rooted in geometry. If the original production of the cheeses follows the geometric rules regarding round, angular, conical, spherical and cylindrical shapes, then the cutting direction should adhere to these forms as well. This is visible in the figures shown below. If the cheese lover cuts the cheese according to these illustrations, the product will remain as attractive as it was in its original shape when it was made on the dairy farm.





①GRANA PADANO
②PROVOLONE
③PARMIGIANO REGGIANO
④FONTINA
⑤FIORE SARDO
⑥ASIAGO
⑦MOZZARELLA DI BUFALA
⑧CACIOCAVALLO
⑨CACIOCAVALLO
⑩BERGKÄSE



⑪ AOSTINO
⑫ BERGKÄSE
⑬ TALEGGIO
⑭ ROBIOLA
⑮ GORGONZOLA
⑯ RAGUSANO
⑰ MONTASIO

A Cheese Buffet

I am sure you can satisfy even the most demanding guests when you invite them to an Italian cheese buffet accompanied by Italian wines. The choice of Italian cheese is so varied, that one evening will not suffice to gain familiarity, even if one only serves the most well-known cheeses. The hosts should be familiar with the history and geography related to the cheeses served (this book provides all the necessary facts) in order to be able to provide the information, if asked. The cheese selection should be as diversified as possible with regard to taste, consistency, and shape. Therefore, the buffet should contain hard, table, veined and fresh cheeses. The buffet should be prepared with large pieces whenever possible, so that the cake-shaped, cylindrical, square and cone shapes are visible. The arrangement can be rustic with tin, copper and wood - a reminder of the old still-life - or entirely modern and functional with clear glass and chrome.

A wood table and a linen tablecloth are the most essential elements for a suitable background. The cheeses are arranged on a wooden board so that one may also cut the cheese with the knives placed alongside. The table should hold stacks of dishes, silverware and napkins. According to the number of guests, decorative bowls or baskets filled with apples, pears, blue and green grapes, peaches, avocados and nuts or even small melons and figs should be placed on the table. Bowls or baskets with tomatoes and multicolored peppers and celery stalks should be available. Small bowls with spiced cucumbers, small onions, relishes and radishes are also a good idea. Also, various types of mustard make for a nice alternative. Salads made from rampion, dandelions, cress, radishes or various combinations should be served. Another suggestion might be a basket with dried, peeled potatoes wrapped in napkins.

The following breads are recommended: rye, whole wheat, brown, (at least one home-baked), garlic, nut, onion and salty, spiral-shaped rolls, freshly baked Italian bread or breadsticks. As a finishing touch, a scented, airy dessert with a chocolate cream or "zuppa inglese" is recommended.

Recipes with Cheeses from Italy

Snacks and Cold Appetizers

For a successful cocktail party, appetizing cheese snacks are a sure hit. These serve as savory contrasts to the drinks. Within, this warm, inviting atmosphere, wine, beer and cheese snacks are a great combination.

Doubling the quantities for warm appetizers can make for an entree or small main dish when combined with a cup of soup and light dessert.

All hot dishes must be served straight from the oven so the cheese retains its melted, creamy consistency. Crockers topped with cheese may be baked ahead of time, but should be warmed prior to serving.

The vast selection of cheeses from Italy always provides new palatable joys for cheese lovers.

Open-faced Tarts with Anchovies (Crostini di Acciughe)

1 loaf of Italian bread, 7 oz. Mozzarella, 16 anchovy fillets, drained, 3 tablespoons capers, 2 cloves garlic, I tablespoon minced parsley, 4 tablespoons olive oil, pepper.

Slice the bread and Mozzarella. Crush the anchovies, capers and garlic with a mortar and pestle or grind in a blender or food processor to form a paste; they can also be minced finely by hand to obtain a spreadable mixture. Stir in 4 tablespoons olive oil and add pepper. Spread this paste on slices of bread and top with a slice of Mozzarella. Cover with a second slice of bread. Baste the bread on both sides with oil and arrange in an oven-proof serving dish. Bake in a pre-heated oven of 250 F until golden brown, turn over only once. Serve hot.

Avocados with Gorgonzola

2 ripe avocados, 6 tablespoons Mascarpone, 3 1/2 oz. Ricotta, 2 oz. Gorgonzola, Lemon juice, 1 1/2 oz. Salmon caviar.

Cut the avocados in half, remove the pit and carefully peel off the skin. Mash the Gorgonzola with a fork and mix in with the Mascarpone and Ricotta. Add lemon juice to taste.

Cut the avocados lenghthwise and slice thin, leaving the lower, narrower end attached. Pull them apart into a fan shape and place them on four plates. Place some Gorgonzola alongside each of the avocados and garnish them with 1/2 oz. of salmon caviar.

Mashed Potatoes Baked With Eggs And Cheese (Budino di Patate)

4 potatoes, 2 cups freshly grated Parmigiano Reggiano, 2 eggs, I cup milk, salt and freshly ground white pepper to taste, 6 tablespoons unsalted butter.

Boil or steam the potatoes until tender. Drain, peel while still hot and mash. Add the cheese, eggs, milk, salt and pepper, mixing thoroughly.

Transfer to a buttered baking dish and bake in preheated oven 400 F for about 30 minutes.

Gorgonzola Canapes

5 oz. Gorgonzola, 3 celery stalks, 2 oz. butter, 2 tablespoons Grappa, I round Pumpernickle bread, Shelled walnuts.

Finely mash the Gorgonzola with a fork, cut celery into thin strips and dice. Blend with softened butter and Grappa until creamy and stir into Gorgonzola mixture. Add celery cubes to the cheese mixture. Put into a pastry tube. Pipe a finger-tick layer of cream cheese on the slices of pumpernickle and garnish with a sprinkling of coarsely chopped walnuts.

Provolone Canapes

1/2 Italian Bread, 1 1/2 oz. unsalted Butter, 1/2 teaspoon spicy mustard, Several small lettuce leaves, rinsed, pat dry to remove water, 1 1/2 oz. Genoa salami, thinly sliced, 1 1/2 oz. Provolone, thinly sliced, Pickled Gherkins, thinly sliced to the base, then fanned.

Warm the bread in the oven and slice. Mix softened butter with mustard and spread on slices of bread. Place a small piece of lettuce on top. Make a small cut on each slice of salami, then roll up and place two salami rolls on top of the lettuce. Place a slice of Provolone on top of each salami roll, leaving 1/3 of the salami uncovered. Garnish with fan-shaped pickled gherkins.

Cheese Nuggets (Bocconcini di formaggio)

5 oz. Fontina, Montasio, Caciocavallo, Provolone, Asiago, cut into 1/2 inch thick slices, rind removed - Garnishings: Anchovy rolls, stuffed olives, relishes, small onions, cornichons, tangerine sections, strips of pickled red peppers, small fresh mushrooms, small kiwis, grapes, walnut halves, candied ginger.

The more varied the type of cheese, the more tasty the cheese nuggets.

Slice the cheese into finger-thick cubes. All garnishings under oil, pickled or moist, must be drained well on paper towels. Wash the mushrooms and remove the stems. Peel the kiwis, cut into strips, and if desired, halve them. Place each of the garnishings on a cocktail spear - this also gives a pleasing appearence when two anchovy rolls or different varieties of pickled vegetables are placed on top of each other. Then insert the spear into the cheese cubes. The cheese spears may then be inserted into a grapefruit, pineapple or head of cabbage or arranged on a serving dish.

(see Photo)

Salmon Canapes (Tartine al salmone)

4 oz. smoked salmon, 6 tablespoons sweet butter, 1/3 cup freshly grated Parmigiano Reggiano, I tablespoon fresh lemon juice, 6 pitted black olives, halved, 12 slices firm white bread, 1/2 inch thick, 3 to 4 inches wide.

Put the salmon, butter, cheese and juice in a food processor or blender and chop to a smooth puree. Spread on the sliced bread. Garnish by placing a black olive in the center of each canape.


MARTI
BIAN
PUNT
MES

Canapes with Parmesan Cheese

1 square loaf of bread, 7 oz. freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano, 3 1/2 oz. unsalted butter, 4 tablespoons Mascarpone, I egg yolk, 2 tablespoons grated horseradish, 1/2 apples, finely grated, 3 1/2 oz. boiled or baked ham, finely chopped, I teaspoon mustard, small sliced cucumbers, pepper strips.

Slice the bread lengthwise. With a round cookie cutter, cut circles from the interior. Blend the cheeses, soft butter and egg yolk. Separate into 2 parts. Mix one half with horseradish and apple; the other half with ham and mustard. Put each mixture into separate pastry tubes and pipe a thick layer onto each round of bread. Garnish with cucumber slices and pepper strips.

Spring Canapes (Canapes Primavera)

2 large carrots, grated, 10 hazelnuts, chopped, 1 pinch of sugar, I teaspoon fresh lemon juice, I tablespoon heavy cream, 1/4 celery stalk, 1/2 apple, 2 tablespoons mayonnaise, 6 slices firm white bread, 8 1/2 oz. Fontina, thinly sliced, stuffed olives, sliced.

Blend the carrots, hazelnuts, sugar, lemon juice and mayonnaise. Cut slices of bread diagonally, then into triangles and do the same for Fontina cheese. Spread each of the bread triangles with a thick layer of vegetable spread and top with a piece of cheese. Garnish with 3 slices of olives.

Celery Stalks with Gorgonzola Cream (Coste di Sedano Ripiene)

I bunch celery stalks, 3 1/2 oz. Gorgonzola, 2 oz. unsalted butter, 1/2 teaspoon sharp mustard.

Remove leaves from celery stalks and wash well. Mash the cheese with a fork and mix with softened butter and mustard. Put the mixture in a pastry tube and pipe the cheese spread into the hollow of the celery stalks and place in refrigerator until served.

Taleggio Nuggets (Bocconcini di Taleggio)

10 1/2 oz. Taleggio, 1/2 oz. melted, unsalted butter, 3 1/2 oz. toasted almonds, chopped.

Slice the Taleggio into finger-long strips. Dip the cheese into the melted butter and in almonds to coat. Place in the refrigerator for 1 to 2 hours prior to serving.

Dips are another type of appetizer used to stimulate one's appetite. These are small bowls filled with various savory salad dressings or sauces. Pieces of raw vegetable strips, meats, cheeses, small shrimp, crispy crackers or potato chips are dipped into these dressings.

Nut Canapes

4 oz. Italian Gorgonzola, 4 oz. unsalted butter, 3 to 4 oz. chopped walnuts, Rye bread, thinly sliced, trimmed.

Blend the cheese and butter until smooth and creamy. Mix in walnuts. Cut the bread into 1-inch squares. Spread the cheese mixture on the bread squares. Arrange on plate and serve.

Cheese Spread

2 packages, 3 oz. each cream cheese, softened (or 6 oz. Mascarpone), I or 2 oz. Gorgonzola, 3 tablespoons almond-flavored liqueur, 2 tablespoons chopped toasted almonds, sliced pears or apples tossed in orange juice.

In medium bowl, blend the cheeses, liqueur and almonds. Put in a decorative bowl. Cover and chill for at least 1 hour. Remove from refrigerator 30 minutes before serving. Serve with drained, sliced fruit. Makes approximately 1 cup spread.

Savory Cheese Salads

Fantasy has no limit when preparing cheese salads. Italian cheese offers the most savory combinations with salads, fruits, cooked or raw vegetables, mushrooms, meats, sausages and herbs. Small pieces of hard cheese, strips of table cheese, or cubes of fresh cheese also go well with salads. The following recipes should encourage one to experiment with other combinations.

Iceberg Lettuce with Gorgonzola

I head iceberg lettuce, I hard-boiled egg, coarsely chopped, 2 thin slices white bread, toasted, I clove garlic, 1 1/2 oz. Gorgonzola, 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, 2 tablespoons heavy cream, 1/2 teaspoon sharp mustard, I tablespoon white vinegar, freshly ground white pepper.

Wash the lettuce and drain well. Cut into quarters and then into large, long strips. Rub garlic over the pieces of bread then break the toast into small pieces. Mix bread with lettuce and Gorgonzola. Whisk in the oil, mustard and heavy cream together. Whisk in the vinegar and pepper. Pour over lettuce and mix with salad dressing. Sprinkle with chopped egg.

Apple Salad with Salmon

2 apples (Pippin, Granny Smith, Macintosh) peeled and cored, I bunch scallions, thinly sliced, I bunch water cress, cleaned and trimmed, 5 ounces Pecorino Romano, crumbled, 3 1/2 ounces smoked salmon cut into strips, I tablespoon wine vinegar, I tablespoon white wine, salt, coarsely grated black pepper, I tablespoon sharp mustard, 5 tablespoons olive oil.

Cut the apples into quarters and thin slices. Combine the apples, scallions, watercress, cheese and salmon in a salad bowl. Whisk the vinegar, wine, salt, pepper and mustard together. Slowly pour in the oil and whisk until emulsified. Pour the dressing over the salad and toss.

(see Photo)

Radicchio Salad with Grana Padano (Radiccchio con Grana)

I lb. Radicchio, cleaned, drained, 4 hard cooked eggs, sliced, 24 walnut halves, 5 oz. Grana Padano, 2 tablespoons white wine vinegar, salt, freshly ground white, pepper, 6 tablespoons olive oil.

In a salt bowl, combine the radicchio, eggs, nuts and cheese. Whisk the salt, vinegar and pepper together. Slowly pour in the oil and whisk until emulsified. Pour dressing over the salad and toss.

Fontina Salad

4 yellow or red peppers, 7 oz. Fontina cheese, diced, 4 tablespoons black olives, 2 tablespoons white wine vinegar, I tablespoon sharp mustard, salt, pepper, 3 tablespoons olive oil, 3 tablespoons heavy cream, I clove garlic.

Heat peppers in oven until the skin wrinkles. Remove skin and seeds and cut into strips. Whisk the mustard, salt, pepper and cream. Slowly pour in the oil and whisk until emulsified. Rub freshly cut garlic inside the salad bowl, then put the pepper, cheese and olives in. Pour the dressing over and toss. Refrigerate for one hour before serving to allow salad to marinate.

Cheese Salad with Grapes

7 oz. walnuts, coarsely chopped, 1/2 lb. grapes, halved and seeded, 1/8 liter heavy cream, 3 tablespoons balsamic vinegar, I tablespoon sharp mustard, walnuts.

Mix the cheese, chopped walnuts and grapes together. Whisk the cream, vinegar and mustard until emulsified. Fill glasses or bowls with salad and pour dressing over. Garnish with two walnut halves.

Winter Salad

I lettuce, cleaned and drained, I apple, peeled, 3 1/2fresh mushrooms, sliced, I ripe avocado, I tablespoon lemon juice, 7 oz. Caciocavallo, cut into strips - Salad dressing: 3 tablespoon yogurt, I small onion, I tablespoon mustard, salt, pepper, dillweed, finely chopped, parsley, finely chopped.

Cut the apple into quarters and the strips. Halve the avocado, remove the pit and peel the skin. Cut the avocado into slices. Pour lemon juice over the apple, mushrooms and avocado.

Salad dressing: Whisk the yogurt, lemon juice, diced onion, herbs, salt and pepper until creamy. Slowly pour in the oil until emulsified. Mix all ingredients in a bowl and pour the dressing over and toss. Fresh Italian bread or whole wheat bread with butter may be served on the side.

(see Photo)

Mozzarella with Tomatoes and Basil

2 fresh Mozzarella di bufala (7 oz. each), sliced, 6 large ripe tomatoes, sliced, salt, 6 freshly ground black peppers, fresh basil leaves, 6 tablespoons olive oil.

Line a serving dish with the cheese and tomatoes, alternating the slices. Sprinkle with salt and pepper and top with basil leaves. (Large leaves should be cut into strips). Pour olive oil over the slices.

(see Photo)


TREBBIANO

Hot Appetizers and Meat Dishes

Beef Patties with Aceto Balsamico and Parmigiano Reggiano (Sporite di Manzo)

1/4 thinly sliced onion, I tablespoons vegetable oil, 3 tablespoons unsalted butter, 1/2 cup heavy cream, salt and pepper to taste, I tablespoon balsamic vinegar, I lb. chopped beef round, I cup freshly grated ParmigianoReggiano, 2 egg yolks.

Over low heat, sauté the sliced onion in the oil and I tablespoon butter. When the onion turns a light golden color, add the cream, salt, pepper and the balsamic vinegar and stir thoroughly. Reduce the cream, turn off the heat and let the sauce cool for 1-2 minutes. Set aside. Thoroughly mix beef, the cheese and egg yolks, and season to taste. Shape into 6 patties. Melt two tablespoons of butter in a pan. Sear the patties on both sides, and cook to desired doneness, about 1-3 minutes. Transfer to a warm platter pouring the sauce over the patties and serve.

Ham Puffs (Bignè al prosciutto)

1/4 liter water, 1 1/2 oz. unsalted butter, 5 oz. all-purpose flour, 4 eggs, 5 oz. prosciutto, cubed, 2 oz. Pecorino Siciliano, cubed, 2 oz. Grana Padano, cubed, oil (peanut, sunflower), 1/4 liter thick tomato sauce.

Bring water to boil and add butter. While stirring continuously add flour and cook until it rises from the bottom of the pot. Mix in with eggs. Mix in the cheese and ham. Heat the oil to 375 F. Using rounded tablespoons, drop spoonfuls of the dough into the oil and fry until golden brown. Drain on paper towels and serve immediately.

Chicken stuffed with Vegetables and Cheese

1/2 cup shredded carrot, 1/2 cup chopped celery, 1/2 cup chopped onion, 2 tablespoons unsalted butter or margarine, 4 oz. Gorgonzola, 2 chicken breasts, split, salt and pepper to taste.

Preheat oven to 375 F. Melt 1 tablespoon of butter and sauté carrot, celery and onion. Stir in the cheese. Carefully pull back the skin from the chicken, but do not remove. Season chicken with salt and pepper. Place carrot mixture on chicken, forming a small mound where skin was. Pull the skin over the carrot mixture to cover it. Arrange in shallow baking dish. Gently rub skin with remaining butter. Bake 25-35 minutes or until chicken is tender. Makes 4 servings.



Cheese Scaloppine (Scaloppine di Formaggio)

4 thick slices of Provolone cheese, all-purpose flour, breadcrumbs, I egg, oil (peanut, corn, sunflower).

Cut cheese slices and separate into eight servings. Beat the egg with one tablespoon of salt and one tablespoon of water. Roll the cheese in the flour and dip into the egg, then into the breadcrumbs. Coat the cheese again in the egg and breadcrumbs. Heat the oil in a pen and fry the cheese scaloppine to golden brown. Drain on paper towels. Serve immediately.

A hearty vegetable such as brussel sprouts, cauliflower, broccoli or green beans may be served as a side dish.

Florentine Cheese Tarts (Crostini di Grana Padano)

3 eggs, 3 tablespoons all-purpose flour, 8 1/2 oz. grated Grana Padano, I tablespoon Grappa, few slices of white bread, olive oil.

Beat the egg yolks until frothy and whisk flour, grated cheese and finally Grappa. Beat the egg whites until stiff and fold into the egg yolk mixture. Spread the slices of bread with a thick layer of this mixture. Heat a large amount of oil in a pan, place the bread, cheese side down, into the oil. Fry until golden brown. Drain on paper towels. Serve immediately. Grappa may be served with this dish.

Cheese-filled Crepes (Panzarotti alla Napoletana)

Dough: 8 1/2 oz. all-purpose flour, 1/2 oz. yeast, 118 liter lukewarm water, 112 teaspoon salt, 118 cup oil - Filling: 3 1/2 oz. Ricotta, I egg, I tablespoon chopped parsley, 1 1/2 oz. grated Parmigiano Reggiano, pepper, 3 1/2 oz. Parma Prosciutto, cut into strips, 3 1/2 oz. Mozzarella, cut into strips.

Proof the yeast by adding it to 110 degree F water. When foamy, pour into the flour and salt and blend. Add the oil. Knead the dough until smooth. Cover with a cloth and let rise in a warm place, until doubled for about one hour. Mix the Ricotta, egg, parsley, grated Parmigiano Reggiano and pepper. Mix in the ham and Mozzarella. Roll out the dough on a floured board and with a cookie cutter or glass cut into circles. In the center of each pancake place I tablespoon of filling and roll up to a semi-circle or half moon shape.

Heat a large amount of oil in a pan and fry crepes until golden brown. Remove them with a strainer and drain on paper towels. Serve hot. Serves 20 to 40 panzarotti. If you prepare one large crepe and use the same filling it is similar to a Neopolitan calzone.

Provolone Soup (Zuppa di Provolone)

7 oz. Provolone Tipico dolce, thinly sliced, 5 oz. pancetta or bacon, finely chopped, 1 1/2 oz. unsalted butter, I onion, 2 cloves garlic, a small head of cabbage, cleaned and cut into strips, salt, pepper, several slices toasted white bread, 1 1/2 liters broth (vegetable, chicken, beef).

In a large soup pot, melt the butter. When butter is frothy, sauté the onion, garlic and bacon over low heat for I minute. Before the mixture browns, add the cabbage. Mix thoroughly and let simmer for a few minutes. Add the broth. Cover and let simmer for 15 minutes over low heat. Season to taste. Lightly rub the toast with a piece of freshly cut garlic and place two slices of toasted bread in every soup bowl. Top each slice of bread with a slice of Provolone and pour boiling hot soup into each bowl.

Hot Cheese Sandwiches (Mozzarella in carrozza)

8 slices square white bread, 4 thick slices Mozzarella, 8 anchovy fillets, 2 eggs, salt, 2 tablespoons milk, 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour, cooking oil.

Remove crust from the bread. Place one slice of Mozzarella and 2 anchovy fillets on 4 slices of bread and cover with a second slice of bread to make a sandwich. Lightly dip the edges of the bread into cold water so that they can be pressed closed over the cheese; this prevents the melted cheese from seeping out. Beat the eggs well and add salt. Lightly flour the sandwich bread on both sides. Heat oil in a large skillet, dip the sandwiches in the beaten egg and coat well. Fry until golden brown and drain on a paper towel. Serve immediately. When served with a salad this recpe can be a whole, nourishing meal.

Fillets of breast of turkey with Parmigiano Reggiano (Filetto di tacchino al Parmigiano Reggiano)

I lb. turkey breast cut into 4 slices, I egg, lightly beaten, I cup breadcrumbs, vegetable oil, I tablespoon butter, 5 oz. Parmigiano Reggiano cut into slivers.

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Dip each turkey slice into the egg and then roll into the bread-crumbs. Heat the oil a pan over medium beat and cook the turkey slices until almost done. When done, transfer to a buttered baking dish, cover with Parmigiano Reggiano and place in a 400 preheated oven and bake for 10 minutes or place under broiler and cook until Parmigiano Reggiano is golden brown. Serve immediately.

Piemontese Fondue

8 1/2 oz. Fontina, 1/4 liter milk, 3 egg yolks, I oz. butter, a pinch of white pepper, 4 slices of brown or white bread, optional: I white Alba truffle.

Cut cheese into small cubes, place in a small bowl and cover with milk. Refrigerate for several hours. Place the bowl of cheese over a double-boiler and melt cheese, without boiling the water. Melt butter in a pan and add egg yolk stirring continuously. Add egg yolk and butter to melted cheese mixture. Sprinkle with pepper. When mixture is creamy, pour into 4 pre-heated bowls. Garnish with triangles of toasted white bread. Top with paper-thim shavings of truffle, if desired.

Genovese Tomato Pie

I package of pizza dough flour, 7 oz. Montasio or Pressato, thinly sliced, 5 lbs. ripe tomatoes, 2 tablespoons olive oil, salt, pepper, Basil leaves, 1 1/2 oz. black olives.

Defrost the dough. On a lightly floured board, roll out the dough to 22 cm. diameter thick crust, so that it is slightly longer than the length of the pan. Rinse the pan with water and place the dough in the baking pan so it covers the bottom and sides. Cover the bottom of the dough with half the cheese slices. Dip the tomatoes into boiling water, then remove the skins. Slice lengthwise and place on the crust. Add salt and pepper and spinkle with strips of basil leaves. Top with olives. Drizzle with olive oil and cover with the remaining cheese.Place in a pre-heated 400° F oven and bake for 20 minutes until golden brown. Serve hot.

Risotto with Fresh Mushrooms (Risotto ai funghi)

3 tablespoons finely chopped onion, 3 tablespoons olive oil, I tablespoon chopped parsley, I tablespoon chopped celery, 1 clove garlic, peeled, salt and pepper, 10 oz. fresh mushrooms, sliced thin, I cup milk, 1 1/2 cups Italian Arborio rice, 4 tablespoons heavy cream, 5 cups hot meat broth, I tablespoon butter, I cup freshly grated Parmigiano Reggiano.

In a casserole over medium-high heat, add the oil and sauté the onion and garlic. Add the parsley, celery, salt and pepper. Discard the garlic when it becomes a pale brown color. After about 5 minutes add the mushrooms, and cook over low heat. Stir frequently and add the milk, then the rice and cream. Cook the rice by adding the hot meat broth a ladleful at a time.

Cheese Puffs
(Choux Ripiene)

1/2 liter water, 1 1/2 oz. unsalted butter, salt, 5 oz. all-purpose flour, 4 eggs, nutmeg, 4 oz. freshly grated Grana Padano or Parmigiano Reggiano - Filling: 1/8 liter milk, salt, I tablespoon starch, 3 1/2 oz. freshly grated Grana Padano, I egg yolk, 7 oz. whipped heavy cream, I tablespoon freshly grated horseradish, extra butter for sheet.

Combine water, butter and a pinch of salt and bring to a boil. Pour flour into the liquid mixture. Continuously stir until the mixture does not stick to the bottom and sides of the bowl. Remove from heat and blend in each egg individually. Place 2 heaping tablespoons of the dough onto a buttered baking sheet and bake until golden brown (for about 20-25 minutes). Remove from the oven, cool, cut them in half and fill with the cheese cream. Filling: Bring milk to a boil and add salt. Blend the starch with some cold milk, add to the milk and let boil for I minute. Mix in the cheese and egg yolk. While continuously stirring, cool the cream. Fold in the whipped heavy cream and horseradish. Let cool and just prior to serving fill the puffs with the cheese cream.

Cheese Cookies
(Biscotti al formaggio)

8 1/2 oz. freshly grated Parmigiano Reggiano, 8 1/2 oz. unsalted butter, 6 tablespoons heavy cream, 1 egg, salt, nutmeg, 8 1/2 oz. all-purpose flour, I egg yolk for basting, almonds for topping.

Combine the cheese and butter with the heavy cream, egg, salt and nutmeg to make a dough. Add flour and knead well. Wrap in waxed paper and refrigerate for 1 hour. Roll out the dough and cut into thick slices. Baste with egg yolk and top each cookie with an almond. Bake until golden on a buttered baking sheet.

Pizza

Italian Pizza is well known all over Europe and is topped with an ever-increasing number of ingredients. The genuine Neapolitan pizza consists of bread dough or a simple yeast dough covered with Mozzarella, tomatoes and anchovies, and topped with basil leaves or oregano. In my opinion it is the best type of pizza.

Zucchini Pizza (Pizza alle zucchine)

1 1/2 cups of all purpose flour, I pinch of salt, 1/2 oz. yeast, 1/8 liter lukewarm water (more if necessary), or an already packaged bread or pizza dough. - Topping: 1 1/2 lbs. zucchini, sliced, 1/8 liter olive oil, I clove garlic, salt, pepper, oregano, 10 oz. Mozzarella di Bufala, 4 tablespoons olive oil.

Make a yeast dough used in the Neapolitan recipe. Fry garlic in olive oil until lightly brown; remove and fry zucchini slices until golden in olive oil. Add salt, pepper and oregano. Remove zucchini and drain well. Spread over 4 individual pizza crusts and cover with Mozzarella cut into slices. Sprinkle with olive oil. Pre-heat oven to 450 degrees F. Bake for 15 minutes or until crust is golden brown.

Neapolitan Pizza (Pizza Margherita)

1 1/2 cups all purpose flour, I pinch salt, 1/2 oz. yeast, 1/8 liter (more if necessary) lukewarm water, all-purpose flour or 10 1/2 oz. package of pizza or bread dough. Topping: 10 1/2 oz peeled tomatoes, drained and chopped, 5 oz. Mozzarella, sliced, 1 1/2 oz. drained anchovy fillets, 1 1/2 oz. black olives, pepper, oregano, 4-8 tablespoons olive oil, 4 tablespoons grated Grana Padano.

Prepare a yeast dough made of flour, salt, yeast and lukewarm water. Knead until it lifts, off the sides of the bowl and does not stick to the bottom. Cover, and let rise for one hour on a lightly floured wooden board. Make four individual balls of dough. Filling: Roll out dough balls to round shapes and leave the edges thicker than the center. Cover with tomatoes, cheese and spread anchovy or olives on top. Season with salt and pepper, oregano and basil leaves. Sprinkle with olive oil and grated cheese. Pre-heat the oven to 450 F. Bake for 15 minutes or until the rim of the pizza forms a deep golden crust.

(see Photo)



Pizza Rustica

2 packages of'dough, 14 oz. Ricotta, 5 eggs, 3 1/2 oz. smoked cheese (Provola affumicata), chopped, 7 oz. Mozzarella, 2 tablespoons chopped parsley, 3 1/2 oz. grated Parmigiano Reggiano, salt, pepper, 2 tablespoons chopped garlic, 3 1/2 oz. smoked ham, 1 1/2 oz. salami, chopped.

Defrost the dough and roll out to individual portions. Leave 1/3 of the dough aside. Place the remaining dough in a pizza pan that has been rinsed with cold water. Beat the Ricotta and eggs together in a bowl. Add the cheese and season to taste, Mix in the cheese, ham and salami. Spread the mixture over the dough and leave the edges free. Cut the remaining dough into strips and cover the top of the pie with them. Pre-heat the oven to 450 degrees F. Bake for 20 minutes. Cut into small diagonal pieces or eight portions.

Quick Pizza (Pizza Rapida)

Bread rolls, cut into 8 slices, I glass milk, 3 eggs, 4 tablespoons freshly grated Grana Padano, salt, pepper, extra-virgin olive oil. Topping: 2 small Mozzarella (7 oz.), sliced, 16 anchovy fillets, rinsed, 8 ripe tomatoes, salt, pepper, oregano, 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, milk, eggs.

Combine milk, eggs, salt and pepper. Briefly soak the bread in the egg and milk mixture. Heat the olive oil in a pan and fry the slices of bread until golden brown. Cut the mozzarella in slices, soak the anchovies in water and boil the tomatoes until soft enough to remove the skin and chop. Cover each crispy slice of bread with a slice of Mozzarella, 2 anchovy fillets and a few pieces of tomatoes. Season with salt, pepper, oregano and sprinkle with olive oil. Pre-heat oven to 450 degrees F. Place on a baking sheet and bake until crisp.

Egg Dishes

Cheese Soufflè (Soufflè di formaggio)

2 oz. unsalted butter, 2 oz. all-purpose flour, 1/2 liter milk, salt, pepper, nutmeg, 5 oz. grated Parmigiano Reggiano or 5 oz. Gorgonzola, crumbled, 6 eggs, butter and flour for the soufflè pan.

Melt the butter and whisk in flour. Slowly pour the milk into the mixture while continuously stirring. Boil for one minute to thicken. Season with salt, pepper and nutmeg. Remove from heat and stir in the Parmigiano Reggiano or crumbled Gorgonzola. Whisk in 6 egg yolks, one at a time. Beat the egg whites until stiff. Carefully fold in the egg whites to the doughy mixture using a wooden spatula. Butter and flour the soufflè pan and pour in the mixture. Using a knife, round the edges of the soufflè mixture along the sides of the pan. Place the pan on a rack in the oven and bake at low to medium heat for 15 minutes. Increase the temperature to 350 degrees F. and bake for an additional 30 minutes. Serve immediately.

Scrambled Eggs with Cheese and Herbs (Uova strapazzate alle erbe)

8 eggs, salt, freshly ground white pepper, 1 1/4 oz. freshly grated Grana Padano, 2 tablespoons finely chopped herbs (parsley, chervil, basil), 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, I tablespoon sharp mustard, white or toasted bread.

Mix the grated cheese with the herbs and mustard to form a paste. Lightly beat the eggs, and add salt and freshly grated pepper. Continue whisking until slightly foamy. Melt 1/2 of the butter in a pan under a low flame and pour in the beaten eggs. When this mixture becomes somewhat solid on the bottom, stir continuously with a wooden spoon or spatula. Slowly fold in butter and lastly add the cheese, mustard and herb mixture to the semi-soft eggs. Remove from heat and continue to stir until the desired creamy consistency has been reached. Serve immediately on slice of white or toasted bread.

Gorgonzola-filled Omelettes (Frittata di Gorgonzola)

(2 servings)

1 1/2 oz. Gorgonzola, I tablespoon heavy cream, I pinch nutmeg, 4 eggs, salt, pepper, I tablespoon unsalted butter, some butter for glazing.

Mash the Gorgonzola with a fork and blend with heavy cream. Season with nutmeg. In a double boiler, heat until a thick cream is formed. Beat eggs until frothy and season with salt and pepper. Melt the butter in a pan and pour in egg mixture. Over low heat, cook the eggs until set on the bottom. Pour cheese cream onto the omelettes and fold in half or raising the pan, roll up the omelette. Glaze with fresh butter. Slide into a preheated dish.

Eggs with Cheese Sunny Side Up (Uova al tegarne alla Provatura)

3 1/2 oz. Provatura cheese, diced, 2 pats of butter, 4 eggs, salt, pepper, 2 tablespoons grated Parmigiano Reggiano, 4 slices bread.

Melt the butter in a pan and add cheese. Crack the eggs and place them over the melted cheese. Mix the somewhat solid egg whites with the grated cheese, carefully paying attention to leave the egg yolks intact. Lightly season the egg white with salt and pepper. Arrange eggs on slices of bread, sprinkle with grated cheese and serve immediately.

Soups

Italians sprinkle grated Parmigiano Reggiano and Grana Padano over almost all of their meat and vegetable soups to enhance the flavor. One should also try other hard Italian cheeses, such as grated Caciocavallo on tomato soup; Fiore Sardo on minestrone or Montasio on noodle soup. Cheeses add variety to numerous types of soups.

Egg Flake Soup with Semolina (Stracciatella)

1 1/2 liter beef broth, 2 eggs, 2 tablespoons semolina, salt, 2 tablespoon grated, Parmigiano Reggiano.

Cool 1/2 cup beef broth. Boil remaining beef broth. In a bowl, combine semolina, salt and cheese with eggs using a whisk, or fork. Slowly stir in the cold broth to the mixture, then pour egg mixture into boiling broth, stirring continuously. Let boil 1-2 min. while stirring so that the eggs take on a flaky strip-like shape.

Onion Soup (Cipollata)

2.2 lbs. onions sliced, 1 1/2 oz. shortening, 3 tablespoons olive oil, I lb. ripe tomatoes, 1 1/4 liter beef broth, salt, pepper, 2 1/2 oz. freshly grated Grana Padano, 2 eggs yolks, 8 thin slices white bread.

Sautè the shortening in olive oil until transparent. Sautè the onion until transparent but not brown. While sautèing onions, boil tomatoes until soft enough to remove the skin and cut tomatoes leaving the inner pulp intact. Mix in tomatoes to onions and add 1 1/4 liter of beef broth. Let boil on low heat for 1 1/2 hours, season with salt and pepper. Over low heat stir in grated cheese and amalgamate with egg yolks. Toast bread in oven and put them into deep soup bowls, pour soup over.

Cabbage Soup with Cheese (Zuppa alla Valdostana)

I large head of cabbage, cut into strips, I lb. day-old white bread cut into slices, I liter beef broth, I lb. Fontina, sliced, 5 oz. butter, salt.

Place cabbage in a pot and cover with water, add salt, bring to a boil and cook for 45 minutes. Butter a heat resistant metal or ceramic pan and add a few slices of bread. Soak with a few spoonfuls of beef broth.

Drain the boiled white cabbage in a colander, and place a layer of cabbage in the pan. Pour the butter over and top with slices of Fontina. Add another layer of bread soaked in broth, white cabbage and Fontina, until all ingredients are used. Top off with a layer of white bread and pour in remaining broth. Top with bits of butter. Pre-heat oven to 350 degrees F. Place the pan in oven and bake for 20-30 minutes or until brown. An excellent soup for a cold winter day.

(see Photo)

Poached Egg Soup (Zuppa alla Pavese)

1 1/4 liters beef broth, 4 slices white bread, 1 1/2 oz. butter for frying, 4 fresh eggs, 6 tablespoons freshly grated Parmigiano Reggiano, salt.

In a buttered pan, fry slices of white bread until golden brown, leaving the interior soft. Drain bread on paper towels. Place slice of bread in 4 deep soup bowls. Carefully slide one raw egg onto each slice of bread. Salt lightly and season with grated cheese. Heat the broth and pour over the eggs. The eggs must solidify but not become slippery or it destroys the appetizing appearance of the soup.



Pastas

What would Italian cuisine be without its variety of noodles, macaroni and spaghetti? And what would these tasty pasta dishes be without cheese?

Parmigiano Reggiano, Grana Padano and Pecorino are traditional cheeses used to enhance the flavor of pasta. But ripened aged Asiago, Caciocavallo, Montasio, Ragusano and Fiore Sardo are equally as suitable for grating. The very sharp, salty Pecorino sheep's milk cheese is not suitable for all pasta dishes but may be essential for some spaghetti "al pesto", "all'amatriciana" or "alla carbonara". Pasta with seafood and fish are generally eaten without cheese.

Italian housewives freshly grate the cheese on a grater prior to serving the meal. This way the full flavor and moisture of the cheese may enhance the pastas.

Spaghetti with Genovese Pesto (Spaghetti col Pesto alla Genovese)

5 cloves of minced garlic, I handful chopped pine nuts, I bunch of fresh basil, chopped (30-40 large leaves), I tablespoon Fiore Sardo or Pecorino Romano, 8 tablespoons olive oil, I lb. spaghetti, salt, 2 potatoes.

In a mortar, crush pine nuts garlic and basil. Add salt to maintain the green color of the basil.

When all ingredients are finely mixed, add cheese and blend. Then slowly pour in the oil, and then blend until creamy using a wooden spoon.

Cut potatoes into small cubes and boil or steam for 5 minutes. Add spaghetti and boil until al dente. Drain and save some hot boiling water. Add some of the boiling water to the sauce to make it smooth. Place spaghetti in a warm plate and mix with 1/2 sauce so the cheese melts, and the sauce enhances the noodles with its flavor. The rest of the sauce is served separately in a bowl.

Spaghetti with Cheese and Pepper (Spaghetti al Cacio e Pepe)

I lb. spaghetti, salt, 3 1/2 oz. Pecorino Romano, black peppercorns.

Bring salted water to a boil and add spaghetti. Stir with a wooden fork so the pasta doesn't stick. Boil spaghetti "al dente" about 8-10 min. and drain in a colander. Save boiled water.

While spaghetti is cooking, grate Pecorino and crush the peppercorns in a mortar.

Place spaghetti in a pre-heated bowl and mix with few spoonfuls of boiling water so that they remain juicy.

Mix in Pecorino and pepper. This rustic spaghetti dish is especially popuar with Romans.

Noodles with Gorgonzola (Fettuccine al Gorgonzola)

1 1/2 cups heavy cream, 7 oz. Gorgonzola, I small glass Vodka, I lb. fettuccine noodles, salt, 3 1/2 oz. freshly grated Parmigiano Reggiano.

Bring salted water to a boil. In a pot, heat the heavy cream and stir in small pieces of Gorgonzola.

As soon as the cheese melts, add Vodka and let simmer for several minutes over a low flame until it is smooth and creamy. In the meantime, boil the noodles, for about 6-8 minutes, until "al dente" and drain.

Mix noodles, sauce and grated cheese in a pre-heated bowl. Fill warmed bowl with noodles and serve immeditely.

Penne in Spicy Sauce (Penne all'Arrabbiata)

I lb. penne, salt, I lb. ripe tomatoes, 7 oz. pancetta (bacon), diced, I diced onion, 2 cloves garlic, 1/2 or I whole hot red pepper, fresh basil, 2 oz. freshly grated Pecorino (especially Pecorino Romano), 2 tablespoons olive oil.

Bring salted water to a boil. Cook the penne in boiling water for 10-12 minutes until "al dente." Meanwhile, boil the tomatoes until soft enough to remove the skin and slice into small pieces leaving the seeds and core intact. Heat oil in a pan, and sautè the onion, pancetta, hot pepper and garlic.

When the onion begins to brown, add the tomatoes and basil. Cook for several minutes over a high flame in an uncovered pot. Add salt.

Remove the hot red pepper. Drain penne and immediately pour into a bowl containing sauce and 1/2 of grated Pecorino. Serve remaining cheese separately.

Spaghetti with Pancetta and Tomatoes (Spaghetti all'Amatriciana)

I lb. spaghetti, salt, 1/2 lb. tomatoes, 3 1/2 oz. pancetta, diced, 2 tablespoons of olive oil, I small onion, diced, I small piece spicy red hot pepper, 2 oz. freshly grated Pecorino Romano.

Boil tomatoes until soft enough to remove skin, cut into small pieces leaving seeds and hard inner pulp intact. Heat oil in a pan, sautè pancetta until transparent. Add diced onion and sautè for I minute over low heat, then add in tomatoes to mixture. Simmer over low heat. Boil salted water and cook spaghetti. Stir with a wooden fork to prevent pasta from sticking. Cook spaghetti for 8-10 minutes until "al dente", and drain.

Place in a warm boil. Remove hot pepper from sauce and mix 1/2 sauce and 1/2 pecorino to the spaghetti. Pour remaining sauce and grated pecorino over the spaghetti.

Macaroni with 4 Cheese Sauce (Maccheroni ai Quattro Formaggi)

2 oz. Caciocavallo, 2 oz. Provolone, 2 oz. Fontina cheese, 1/8 liter warm milk, I lb. macaroni, salt, 2 oz. unsalted butter, 1 1/2 oz. freshly grated Parmigiano Reggiano, black pepper, parsley.

Cut Caciocavallo, Provolone and Fontina cheese into thin strips and pour over warm milk. Let set for I hour.

Bring salted water to a boil and cook macaroni for 10-12 minutes or until it is "al dente." Drain in a colander. Melt butter in a deep saucepan, and stir the macaroni in the melted butter. Add the milk with the cheese and grated parmigiano. Warm over low heat, stirring occasionally until the cheeses have melted. Mix in freshly grated pepper, chopped parsley and serve immediately.

(see Photo)



Provolone Tarts
(Sfogliate al Provolone)
Ingredients: for 6 servings

14 oz. frozen pastry dough, 6 sliced Provolone tipico sweet (11 oz. approx.), 6 slices boiled ham (approx 5 oz.), I egg, flour, butter. Time needed: approx. 40 min. and defrosting of dough.

Defrost dough, remove rind from Provolone and in a bowl beat egg. Butter and flour a baking pan. When dough is defrosted, roll out and cut up 12 squares. Place 6 squares on the bottom of the pan and baste the edges of the dough with the beaten egg.

Layer the square with a slice of ham, and provolone, making sure not to overlap with the edges coated with egg. Cover the squares with the remaining 6 pieces of dough and pinch the edges closed.

Even off the edges using a pastry knife. Baste the tops of the dough with the remaining egg and let set for about 10 minutes. Bake in a pre-heated 375 F, oven for approx. 12 min. or until golden brown. Serve immediately. The dishes may be garnished with small strips of ham or pieces of endive lettuce.

Spaghetti with Walnuts and Eggs
(Spaghetti con le Noci e le Uova)

I lb. spaghetti, salt, 7 oz. walnuts finely chopped, 3 1/2 oz. freshly grated Parmigiano Reggiano or Grana Padano, 4 egg yolks, 1/8 liter heavy cream, 1 1/2 oz. butter.

Bring salted water to a boil and drop in spaghetti. Stir with a wooden fork to prevent pasta from sticking. Cook spaghetti for 8-10 minutes or until "al dente." In a depp bowl mix the egg yolk and heavy cream. Drain spaghetti and place in a bowl with eggs. Add nuts. Mix well until the noodles are completely covered with the egg mixture. Finally mix butter into the spaghetti. Serve immediately.

Spaghetti with Eggs and Pancetta
(Spaghetti alla Carbonara)

I lb. spaghetti, salt, 5 oz. pancetta, diced, I tablespoon olive oil, 4 eggs, 2 tablespoons heavy cream, 3 1/2 oz. freshly grated Pecorino Romano, freshly crushed pepper.

Drop spaghetti into boiling salted water. Stir with a wooden fork to prevent pasta from sticking. Cook spaghetti for 8-10 minutes or until "al dente." Sautè the pancetta in oil. In a bowl beat the eggs, heavy cream, grated cheese, salt and pepper until smooth. Drain spaghetti. Transfer to a warm serving bowl, pour all the egg mixture and pancetta over pasta and mix thoroughly. Serve immediately.


Frascati
Superiore

Baked Cannelloni with Cheese Filling (Cannelloni con Mozzarella Ricotta e Prosciutto)

Dough: 14 oz. wheat flour, 4 eggs, 1/2 teaspoon salt. Filling: 8 1/2 oz. Ricotta, 7 oz. Mozzarella, 1 1/2 oz. prosciutto, 1 1/2 boiled ham, 2 eggs, salt, pepper. Tomato sauce: 10 1/2 oz. fresh tomatoes, 2 1/2 oz. butter, 4 basil leaves, unsalted butter, 2 oz. freshly grated Parmigiano Reggiano.

Mix flour, eggs and salt to make the dough. Let set for 20 minutes in a warm place. Strain the ricotta in a sieve. Cut Mozzarella and ham into thin strips. Slightly beat eggs and stir into Ricotta. Stir the ham and Mozzarella into the Ricotta and season for taste. Roll out dough on a lightly floured board to a knife back thickness. Cut into squares using a sharp knife. Bring salted water to a boil.

Cook squares for 7-8 minutes, drain pasta and place in a bowl of cold water with a small amount of oil. Boil tomatoes until soft enough to remove skin; cut into small pieces. Melt the butter, add tomatoes and simmer for 5 minutes. Add chopped basil and season with salt and pepper. Butter a heat resistent flat pan and line the bottom with a few spoonfuls of tomato sauce.

At one end spread cannelloni with the cheese filling and roll up, placing the open end of the rolled cannelloni on the bottom of the baking pan.

Pour remaining tomato sauce and spinkle with grated cheese. Bake at 375 F oven for 12-15 minutes.

Fettuccine all'Alfredo

Dough: I lb. all purpose flour (durum wheat), 4 eggs, 112 teaspoon salt, I tablespoon of olive oil. - 3 112 oz. butter, 3 112 oz. freshly grated Grana Padano.

Mix flour, eggs, salt and oil to make the dough. Knead until smooth. Let set for 20 minutes. Roll dough on a lightly floured board to a 1/8 inch thickness. Let dry for an additional 30 minutes. Roll the dough and cut into strips. Bring salted water to a boil. Roll out noodles, and cook for several minutes until "al dente." Drain noodles and place in a warm dish without letting the pasta cool. Mix in fresh bits of butter and grated cheese directly over noodles. Mix throughly until butter and cheese are thoroughly melted. Serve pasta on warm plates and enjoy. You can also add warm, heavy cream to the noodles.

Cheese Crepes au Gratin (Crespelle ripiene)

Crespelle: 2 oz. all purpose flour, 1/8 liter milk, I pinch salt, 4 eggs, I ozz. unsalted butter, melted (add extra if needed). Besciamelle sauce: I oz. unsalted butter, I oz. all purpose flour, 1/4 liter milk, salt, pepper, nutmeg. Filling: 5 oz. prosciutto or boiled ham, diced, 3 1/2 oz. Mozzarella diced, 5 oz. Ricota, 1 1/2 oz. freshly grated Parmigiano Reggiano or Grana Padano, small basil leaves, salt, pepper. - Topping: I oz. freshly grated Parmigiano Reggiano, I tablespoon butter.

In a large bowl, whisk the milk, salt and eggs together, Add the flour and whisk until a batter is formed. Add the melted butter. In an omelete or crepe pan melt I tablespoon of butter, pour in 1/4 cup batter, swirl to evenly distribute batter and cook over low heat until the crepe (crespelle) is set and a very light golden color underneath.

Remove and carefully place flat on a plate. Cool. Repeat until all the batter is used. Meanwhile prepare the besciamelle sauce. Melt butter, add flour and cook over low heat until light brown. Whisk in the milk slowly. Bring to a boil for about I minute continuously stirring until thick. Season with salt, pepper and nutmeg. Strain the ricotta and mix whit the cool besciamelle sauce. Mix the ham and cheese with sauce, add grated cheese and minced basil leaves. Season with salt and pepper. Fill each crepe with mixture and roll up. Place in a buttered, flat, heat-resistant pan. Pour a few spoonfuls of fresh thick tomato sauce on top. Sprinkle with grated cheese and dot with some bits of butter. Pre-heat oven to 375 F and bake for 10-15 minutes. Serve immediately.

Risotto with Cheese Cream (Risotto alla Fonduta)

Fonduta: 5 oz. Fontina diced, 1/8 liter milk, 2 egg yolks, I oz. unsalted butter, pinch of white pepper. - Risotto: 1 1/2 oz. unsalted butter, I small onion diced, I glass dry Italian white wine, 3/4 liter beef broth, salt.

Cover Fontina with milk and soak for several hours in the refrigerator. Melt butter, and over low heat sautè onion until transparent. Add the rice and stir until it absorbs the butter. Pour in the white wine and when absorbed, pour in small amount of hot beef broth. Cook until each amount of beef broth is absorbed, then repeat until all is used. While rice is cooking, prepare the fondue. Place the softened cheese and milk in a double boiler and cook. Stir in the egg yolk and melted butter until the cheese is melted. Add this mixture to the cheese cream stirring continuously. Pour rice into warmed bowls, pour fondue over rice and serve immediately. During the truffle season paper-thin shavings of truffles may be added as a topping.

Fish

Scampi in Gorgonzola Cream (Scampi al Gorgonzola)

I lb. cleaned scampi or shrimp tails, all purpose flour, 1 1/4 oz. unsalted butter, I small glass Italian brandy, salt, pepper, 20 fresh basil leaves, 1/8 liter heavy cream, 1 1/4 oz. Gorgonzola, 1 1/4 oz. Parmigiano Reggiano (freshly grated).

Coat scampi tails in flour. Melt butter in a sautè pan and quickly cook scampi. Season with salt and pepper. Turn heat to high, pour in the brandy and deglaze the pan, continuously stirring. Tear the basil leaves, add to the scampi and pour in the heavy cream. Add crushed Gorgonzola and thicken the sauce. Butter 4 small, flat baking pans, arrange the scampi and top with sauce. Sprinkle Parmigiano Reggiano over and broil until the cheese is golden brown. You may serve this with a salad and fresh Italian bread as side dishes.

(sec Photo)

Sicilian Tuna Rolls (Braciole di Tonno)

5 large slices boneless tunafish, I small onion, I cup olive oil, salt, pepper, 2 tablespoons bread crumbs, 4 tablespoons fruity Italian white wine, 4 slices Mozzarella, 12 fresh basil leaves.

Cut up I slice of tunafish into 2 small pieces and dice the onion. Heat 1/2 cup olive oil and sautè the onion over low heat until transparent. Sautè the fish. Season with salt and pepper. Add breadcrumbs and wine and stir. Spread this paste on the other 4 slices of tunafish, and place 1 slice of Mozzarella on top, cover with basil leaf. Roll up and close with a toothpick. Fry in remaining olive oil, until brown on all sides for aprox. 5 minutes.



Meat and Poultry

Turkey Breasts alla Modenese (Petti di Tacchino alla Modenese)

4 slices turkey breast, salt, I egg, beaten, 3 tablespoons breadcrumbs, 2 oz. unsalted butter, 4 slices Parma prosciutto, 3 1/2 oz. of thin Parmigiano Reggiano shavings, I onion, 1/2 lb. tomatoes, pepper.

Using a meat cleaver pound the turkey breasts until flat. Rub with salt. Heat butter. Dip the turkey slices first in egg then coat with breadcrumbs and fry until golden brown. Melt remaining butter in a second skillet and sautè onion. Boil tomatoes until soft enough to remove skin, and cut into small pieces. Mix tomatoes with butter and let simmer. Top each turkey slice with I slice of Parma prosciutto and some shavings of Parmigiano Reggiano. Broil scaloppine to let cheese melt, but not turn brown. Remove and top each turkey slice with I spoonful of tomato sauce.

Pork Rolls alla Siciliana (Involtini di Maiale alla Siciliana)

8 thin, small slices of pork (2 1/2 oz. each), 1 1/2 oz. ground beef, 4 tablespoon of breadcrumbs, 3 tablespoon olive oil, 3 tablespoon pine nuts (may be substituted with almond slivers), 4 tablespoon raisins, 4 tablespoon freshly grated Pecorino Siciliano, I egg white, I tablespoon all-purpose flour, 3 tablespoons olive oil for frying, 4 ounces Marsala, I tablespoon cold unsalted butter, salt, pepper.

Heat oil in a pan and lightly brown the breadcrumbs. Add the ground beef, pine nuts, raisins and Pecorino and blend. Cool in a bowl mix the egg white with the breadcrumb mixture, and season with salt and pepper. Place 1 spoonful of filling on each slice of pork. Roll up and hold together with a toothpick. Lightly flour meat. Heat the oil and sautè the rolls until light brown on all sides. Transfer to warm serving plate. Turn the heat to high deglaze with Marsala. Remove from the heat stirring constantly. Whisk in the cold butter to thicken the sauce. Finally, pour gravy over the pork rolls.

Genovese Meatballs (Polpette alla Genovese)

14 oz. ground beef, 6 tablespoons breadcrumbs, 6 tablespoons milk, 2 tablespoons raisins, 1 garlic clove, minced, 3 1/2 oz. pancetta, finely chopped, 2 tablespoons pine nuts, 3 1/2 oz. freshly grated Grana Padano, I tablespoon chopped parsley, oregano, 2 egg yolks, salt, pepper. Sauce: 4 tablespoons olive oil, I onion diced, I carrot, grated, I celery stalk, thinly sliced, I lb tomatoes, I tablespoon tomato paste, 2 garlic cloves, 8 tablespoons olive oil for frying, beef broth (optional).

Moisten the breadcrumbs with milk. Soak the raisins in lukewarm water and drain. Combine the meat, moistened breadcrumbs, drained raisins, garlic, 1/2 of the pancetta, pine nuts, Grana Padano, parsley, oregano, egg yolk, salt and pepper and mix well. Cover and refrigerate for a few hours or overnight.

For the sauce: dip tomatoes into boiling water, drain, remove skin and cut into small pieces leaving the hard yellow pulp. Heat the oil and saute the vegetables and remaining pancetta for 1 minute. Add the tomato. Add the cloves and tomato paste. Season with salt and pepper. Let simmer in a covered pot for 20 minutes. If necessary add beef broth. At this time heat oil and fry meatballs until golden brown. Drain, add meatballs to tomato sauce and let simmer for an additional 5 minutes.

Savory Ham and Cheese Snack

Bread slices, tomatoes, oil and salt, hot dried chili peppers, oregano, slices of Grana Padano.

Chop tomatoes, place into an oiled, salted saucepan, add dried chili peppers to taste. Season with oregano. Simmer for 8-10 minutes or until the tomatoes form a sauce. Spread some of the sauce over the sliced bread, then top with cooked ham and Grana Padano. Top with a spoonful of remaining sauce. Pre-heat oven to 325 F. and bake until cheese begins to melt. Serve immediately.

Veal Slices alla Bolognese (Scaloppine alla Bolognese)

4 slices of veal (5 oz. each), 2 iablespoons fresh lemon juice, salt, pepper, I tablespoon freshly grated Parmigiano Reggiano or Grana Padano, I egg, beaten, 6 tablespoons breadcrumbs, 6 oz. unsalted butter, 4 slices Parma prosciutto, 3 1/2 oz. thinly shaved Grana Padano slices, 4 tablespoons tomato paste.

Pound the meat slices with a meat cleaver. Combine salt, pepper, lemon juice and grated cheese to make a marinade. Marinate the veal slices for 30 minutes. Remove and drain thoroughly. Dip slices in beaten egg and coat with breadcrumbs. Melt butter in a pan, sautè the veal until brown on both sides. Top each veal slice with I slice prosciutto and a few cheese shavings. Cover the pot with a lid and let meat simmer over low flame until cheese melts. Finally top with I tablespoon tomato paste on each slice.

(see Photo)

Steak with Gorgonzola Butter (Steak con Burro di Gorgonzola)

4 slices of filet or rump steak (7-8 oz. each), salt, pepper, I tablespoon olive oil, I tablespoon unsalted butter, 2 oz. butter, 2 oz. Gorgonzola, 1 1/2 teaspoon fresh lemon juice, I tablespoon chopped parsley.

Prepare Gorgonzola butter the day before and refrigerate: soften the butter, add Gorgonzola, chopped parsley and mix until smooth. Place Gorgonzola butter on tin foil, roll and leave wrapped overnight in the refrigerator.

Heat oil and butter in a pan. Sear the steak on both sides, and cook until desired doneness, 1-4 minutes. Top with freshly crushed pepper. Salt steaks and put in a warm plate. Spread a layer of Gorgonzola butter on each steak and serve immediately.


DOLCETTO

Stuffed Chicken alla Novarese (Pollo ripieno alla Novarese)

I small chicken and liver (approx. 3 lbs.), 3 1/2 oz. Italian sausage, I small onion, chopped, I cup breadcrumbs soaked in I cup milk, I egg yolk, 2 oz. Gorgonzola, 1 1/2 oz. walnuts, coarsely chopped, salt, pepper, oregano, 2 tablespoons unsalted white wine, 1/8 liter heavy cream, 1 1/2 oz. raisins.

Rinse chicken, then dry well. Purée chicken liver, sausage and onion in a blender or food processor. Add breadcrumbs, egg yolk, crumbled Gorgonzola and walnuts. Season with salt, pepper and oregano. Fill chicken with the stuffing, leaving aside 2 tablespoons. Truss the chicken. Melt the butter in a saucepan and brown chicken on all sides, pour grappa over chicken and deglaze. Add wine, salt and pepper. Cover the pot and place in a preheated oven, bake at medium heat for I hour. Remove cover and let bake an additional 15 minutes, occasionally basting with drippings. Remove chicken from pan and place on a warm platter. To the sauce add heavy cream and the remaining stuffing and raisins and thicken slightly over high heat. Remove stuffing carefully from chicken and arrange on a pre-heated platter. Cut up chicken and arrange on platter. Garnish with fresh watercress. Serve sauce separately.

Veal Rolls alla Milanese (Involtini alla Milanese)

8 small, thin slices Veal (2 1/2 oz. each), salt, 8 slices Parma Prosciutto, 8 tablespoons freshly grated Grana Padano, I carrot shredded, I celery stalk, thinly sliced, I onion diced, 3 tablespoons olive oil, 2 tomatoes, 3 tablespoons Italian red wine, 1/2 cup beef broth, few small rosemary leaves, I tablespoon butter.

Pound veal slices with a meat cleaver and rub with salt. Halve the slices of prosciutto and place one half on each veal slice. Sprinkle a thick coating of grated cheese. Roll up and secure with a toothpick. Heat oil and brown on all sides. Dip tomatoes into boiling water, drain and remove skin and chop. Add to meat and sauté lightly. Season with salt and pepper. Turn heat to high and deglaze with wine, stirring continuously until thick. Add beef broth. Cover and simmer for 5-10 minutes. Remove lid and let beef broth thicken slightly. Add butter and baste veal rolls with sauce. Serve mashed potatoes and spring peas with veal rolls.

Roasted chicken (Pollo Dorato)

I roasting chicken, pepper, salt, all-purpose flour, 2 eggs, olive oil, 4 slices Parma prosciutto, fresh sage leaves, 4 slices Montasio or Fontina, 1/8 liter heavy cream, 1 tablespoon tomato paste, unsalted butter.

Quarter the chicken and rub with salt and pepper. Roll in flour then dip in beaten eggs. Heat oil to 375 F. and fry chicken until golden brown. Drain on paper towel. Lightly butter a heat resistent baking pan. Wrap each chicken piece with a slice of prosciutto and place in the baking pan. Sprinkle with sage and top with cheese slices. Combine heavy cream with tomato paste, salt and pepper, and pour over chicken. Pre-heat oven to 375 F and bake for 20 minutes.

Loin of Veal alla Parmigiana (Lombatine di Vitello alla Parmigiana)

4 slices veal loin, 3 tablespoons unsalted butter, I slice (3 oz.) prosciutto diced, I tablespoon chopped parsley, 8 tablespoons freshly grated Parmigiano Reggiano, 4 tablespoons Marsala.

Melt butter and sear meat on both sides. Mix prosciutto, parseley, Parmigiano Reggiano and Marsala. Spread the cheese mixture on veal slices and place in a butter, heat-resistent pan. Pre-heat broiler and cook until cheese turns golden brown.

Stuffed Veal Chops (Cotolette di Vitello alla valdostana) (Val D'Aosta)

4 thick veal chops, 3 1/2 oz. Fontina, pepper, all-purpose flour, I egg, breadcrumbs, butter.

Using a sharp knife cut the chops in the middle to the bone. Cut Fontina into 4 parts, then into thin slices. Stuff cheese between halves of meat and pinch closed, eventually pounding lightly with a meat cleaver. Dip in the egg and then in breadcrumbs. Melt butter in a pan and sauté breaded chops until golden brown.

Vegetables

In Italy, vegetables are usually boiled in their own juices or par-boiled in lightly salted water so that their natural flavor is fully preserved. But the "piece de resistance" is the hard grated cheese that is softened in melted butter then poured over the vegetables, or it may be broiled in the oven with the vegetables.

Baked Eggplants Parmesan (Parmigiana di Melanzane)

3 lbs eggplants, salt, 2 lbs ripe tomatoes, I medium size onion diced, 4 tablespoons olive oil, fresh basil leaves chopped, pepper, all-purpose flour, 5 oz. freshly grated Parmigiano Reggiano, 10 oz. Mozzarella di Bufala, 2 hard boiled eggs, Olive oil, Butter.

Wash and slice eggplants lenghth-wise, sprinkle with salt. Cover with dish and weigh down. Leave 30 minutes. Meanwhile drop tomatoes into boiling water and let boil for several minutes, drain, remove skin and chop. Heat oil in a pan and over low heat sauté onion until transparent. Add tomatoes and basil. Simmer until thick and season with salt and pepper. Pour off the brownish liquid from the eggplants and dry the slices. Roll in flour and fry. Butter a flat, heat-resistent pan and layer the bottom with eggplant slices. Sprinkle over grated cheese and cover with slices of mozzarella and hard-boiled egg. Top with a spoonful of tomato sauce and repeat layers until all ingredients have been used. Top with tomato sauce. Pre-heat oven to 400 F. Bake for 30 minutes. The eggplant parmigiana is delicious whether eaten hot or cold.

(see Photo)



Spinach Soufflè
(Soufflè di Spinaci)

7 oz. boiled or steamed spinach, 3 oz. unsalted butter, 3 scallions chopped, 2 1/2 oz. boiled ham, salt, nutmeg, 1 1/3 oz. all-purpose flour, 1/2 liter milk, 5 eggs (4 egg yolks, 5 whites), 2 1/2 oz. grated Grana Padano.

Drain cooked spinach well, and squeeze using hands or towel. Finely chop. Melt 1 oz. butter and sautéd scallions until trasparent. Add spinach and sauté over low heat for 6 minutes or until somewhat dry. Season with salt and nutmeg. In another saucepan melt butter and add flour. Cook until golden, then whisk in the milk. Stirring constantly, bring to a boil, then remove from heat. Whisk in the egg yolks mixing well. Sprinkle with grated cheese.

Beat egg whites until stiff. Using a wooden spatula, carefully fold into mixture. Fill 2/3 of the buttered soufflé pan with the mixture. Place in a pre-heated oven and bake at 300 F for 15 minutes. Then raise temperature to 350 F and bake an additional 30 minutes or until risen and golden on top. Serve immediately.

Stuffed Peppers with Rice
(Peperoni ripieni di Riso)

4 large green or yellow peppers, 6 tablespoons olive oil, I small onion chopped, 5 oz. rice, 1/2 liter beef broth, 3 1/2 oz. boiled ham in strips, 1 1/2 oz. salami in strips, 7 oz. Mozzarella diced, clove of garlic, I teaspoon minced parsley, salt, pepper, 4 tablespoons freshly grated Parmigiano Reggiano.

Cut stems of peppers leaving seeds intact. Heat 3 tablespoons olive oil and over low heat sauté onions until trasparent. Add rice and saut6 until rice becomes trasparent. Add beef broth and boil rice until almost fully cooked or bubbly (15 minutes). After 10 minutes add ham and salami strips. Remove from heat. Mix the cheese, parsley and garlic with rice. Season with salt and pepper. Stuff the peppers with rice mixture. Place remainig oil in heat-resistant pan, add peppers and cover. Pre-heat oven to 400 F. Brush peppers with oil and bake for aprox. 60 minutes. Sprinkle with grated cheese. Tomato sauce may be served with this dish.

Baked Asparagus
(Asparagi alla Parmigiana)

4 1/2 lbs green asparagus, salt, 3 1/2 oz. Parmigiano Reggiano, 3 1/2 oz. unsalted butter.

Wash and peel the lower end of the asparagus. Steam until tender, about 4-6 minutes or until almost tender. Pre-heat the oven to 400 F. Place the cooked asparagus at alternate levels in a buttered pan so that the tips are free and sprinkle grated cheese over asparagus tips. Pour melted butter over vegetables and bake until cheese begins to melt. Strips of ham can also be added.

Leaf Spinach alla Fiorentina
(Spinaci alla Fiorentina)

2 lbs spinach, salt, 4 tablespoons butter, 4 tablespoons freshly grated Parmigiano Reggiano.

Carefully wash spinach. Steam until tender and transfer to a serving plate. Season with salt. While vegetable is cooling, melt the butter and mix in the grated cheese. Pour over spinach.

Green Beans alla Fiorentina
(Fagiolini Trifolati)

1 1/2 lbs small young green string beans, trimmed, salt, 2 oz. unsalted butter, 1/2 clove of garlic, I onion, I tablespoon chopped parsley, black pepper, 4 tablespoons freshly grated Grana Padano.

Wash and remove the tips and bottoms of the green beans. Steam for 6-8 minutes until "al dente." Melt butter while beans are cooking. Sauté garlic and onion until transparent. Add 5 tablespoons of water and boil for approximately 10 minutes. This should be done until the onion becomes soft and water has evaporated. Mix drained beans with onion, butter and parsley. Sprinkle with freshly crushed pepper and grated cheese. Serve immediately. The beans can be placed in a hot oven until cheese begins to melt.

Celery au Gratin (Sedani Gratinati)

I bunch celery stalks, salt, 2 1/2 oz. freshly grated Grana Padano, 2 1/2 oz. unsalted butter.

Remove hard, outer celery stalks from bunch. Separate the remaining stalks, wash well and cut into finger-thick pieces. Steam celery for 5-7 minutes or until tender. Place in a buttered heat-resistant dish and sprinkle with grated cheese. Evenly distribute the melted butter over the vegetable. Pre-heat broiler and broil until the cheese begins to melt.

Baked Tomatoes (Pomodori Gratinati)

8 medium sized firm tomatoes, I clove garlic minced, I bunch parsley minced, 20 basil leaves minced, 2 1/2 oz. freshly grated Caciocavallo, 5 tablespoons breadcrumbs, 2 egg yolks, 4 tablespoons milk, salt, pepper, Olive oil.

Cut off the top of the tomato and use as a cover. With a teaspoon, carefully scoop out part of tomato pulp and chop finely. Mix the garlic, herbs, cheese, breadcrumbs and tomato pulp. Whisk the egg yolks, milk, salt, and pepper together and pour over breadcrumb mixture. Let mixture absorb and fill tomatoes with it. Place in a buttered heat-resistant baking pan and drizzle with olive oil. Pre-heat oven to 400 F and bake until a golden crust forms.

Carrots with Gorgonzola (Carote con Gorgonzola)

2 lbs carrots, thinly sliced, I oz. butter, 1/8 liter heavy cream, 2 1/2 oz. Gorgonzola diced, salt if desired.

Melt butter and lightly sauté carrots. Pour heavy cream into pan and braise carrots until soft. Add the Gorgonzola and carefully stir until cheese is melted. Season with salt to taste.

Cheese Desserts

In Italy a platter of cheeses is a perfect ending to a meal. Fruits often accompany the cheeses - Gorgonzola with pears, aged Parmigiano Regginao or Grana Padano with grapes, Taleggio with fresh apples, Robiola di Roccaverano with nuts, Ragusano with figs and Asiago with kiwi - all make appetizing combinations. There are always new ways to create combinations. But many cheese lovers prefer to eat fully ripened cheeses alone, to fully enjoy the savory flavor of each cheese.

Gorgonzola with Wild Honey (Gorgonzola con Miele Amaro)

4 small thick slices (2 oz. each) Gorgonzola, 4 tablespoons honey, 4 slices nutbread.

Place I slice of Gogonzola on each plate. Pour honey over each slice of Gorgonzola. This cheese may be eaten as is, or accompained with nutbread. Italians traditionally drink a glass of Marsala with this recipe.

Mascarpone Dessert (Tiramisu)

4 eggs, 4 tablespoons granulated sugar, 14 oz. Mascarpone, 4 tablespoons rum, 8 1/2 oz. savoiardi cookies (ladyfinger cookies), I cup strong black-coffe, candied fruits.

Beat egg yolks and sugar until thick and foamy. Blend in the M/2 amount of cookies, then fold with a wmaining 1/2 of cream on top. Garnish with candied fruits. Refrigerate for 1-2 hours before serving.

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The author, Rotraud Degner has also written a cook book entitled "So kocht Italien" published by Hornemann Publishing House in Bonn-Rottgen.

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Photos from p. 60 on
Teubner photographic studios for Foodstuff photography.
All other photos and realization B.W. Bessere Werbung, Dusseldorf.
Publisher
I.C.E. Roma
Under the direction of Italian Ministry for Agriculture and Forestry.

Italian Institute of Foreign Trade
Headquarter: Via Liszt 21 - 001444 Roma Ph. 0650021 Tlx 410160 ICERM I